

Tehran Times warns UAE

NICOSIA (R) — An Iranian newspaper, commenting on a dispute over three islands in the Gulf, said Saturday that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) should be aware that Iran's self-restraint had certain limits. The English-language daily Tehran Times, quoted by Iran's IRNA news agency, dismissed a UAE claim to the Greater and Lesser Tunbs as unfounded. It said a 1971 agreement between Iran and UAE emirate Sharjah still applied to Abu Musa, adding that "the idea of Abu Dhabi officials that Tehran would always refrain from responding to the blows inflicted by them," was "childish." The UAE authorities "would smart for their reckless policies if Iran one day decides to pay them blow for blow," it said. IRNA said the newspaper was commenting on a statement on Wednesday by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) at the end of a summit in Abu Dhabi. The GCC urged Iran to reverse what it says is possession of Abu Musa Island and to pull out of the Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb. IRNA quoted the paper as saying "The United Arab Emirates authorities should realise that Iran's self-restraint has certain limits."

Jordan Times

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Libyan paper: Plane crash 'Western crime'

TUNIS (R) — Libya's official media said Saturday the "terrorist West" may have caused the crash of a Libyan Arab Airlines plane in which 150 people were killed. The official Libyan news agency JANA said Tuesday's crash of the Boeing 727 near Tripoli may have been set up as revenge for the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, in 1988. The Libyan plane, Flight 1103, went down a day after the fourth anniversary of the bombing of the Pan Am Jumbo jet in which 270 people were killed. Al Jamahiriya newspaper, an organ of the revolutionary committees known to reflect Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi's views, wrote: "The Libyan passenger plane crash is one of the abominable crimes of the terrorist West." It said there were indications the "downing of the plane was the result of a plot by Western hands... it is certain the investigation will define that more precisely."

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PU to meet

AMMAN (J.T.) — Arab parliamentarians will meet in Amman on to discuss the plight of 415 Palestinians expelled by Israel from South Lebanon, under House of Parliament speaker Abdul Latif Arabiyat al-Saturday. The Damascus-based Arab Parliamentary Union (PU), which called the emergency meeting in response to a request from Jordan, has sent invitations to its 15 members. We have to meet with our Arab colleagues to discuss the situation of the 415, said Arabiyat. "We go to activate the roles of our parliaments as well as the role of people." (See page 3)

Lebanese and Syrian troops seize arms

TRIPOLI (R) — Lebanese and Syrian soldiers confiscated weapons and drugs and recovered stolen cars Saturday in villages in Lebanon's east. A 500-strong force arrested 1,500 suspects, the officials said. The Lebanese government, seeking to impose its authority, has cracked down on growing and trafficking and launched several security operations across the country.

Pakistan starts new nuclear project

AMMAN (R) — Pakistan's Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) Sunday began the construction of its second nuclear power plant at Chashma in Punjab province, a spokesman said. Pakistan's smaller nuclear power plant, supplied by Canada, was completed in 1972 in the port city of Karachi. Canada later supplied the plant as a sign of good will in the West that Pakistan's nuclear programme was peaceful. Pakistan claims the Chashma plant "will be used version of China's Qin nuclear power station which 12 years ago," the PAEC statement said.

Russians head for ART talks

SCOW (R) — Russia's defence and foreign ministers flew Saturday in an attempt to iron out final details of a strategic arms treaty with U.S. Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger. ITAR-TASS news agency said: Defence Minister Pavel Grachev and Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev left Moscow from a military airfield for a new strategic arms treaty, START-2. The treaty would clear the way for a final Russian President Boris Yeltsin and U.S. President George Bush next month. START-2 would eliminate all U.S. multiple-warhead missiles and slash stockpiles of heads by up to two-thirds.

Prisoners missing in Bosnia, ICRC says

GREB (R) — More than 100 Bosnians who were supposed to be released from the notorious Manjaca detention camp in western Bosnia two weeks ago are still missing. Red Cross officials said Saturday, more than 2,000 prisoners were held from the Serb-run camp in operation overseen by the international Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), but aid workers said at the time 529 of the men, Muslims and Croats — were missing.

No end in sight for expulsion stalemate

Combined agency dispatches

MARI AL ZOHOUR, Lebanon. Agencies — The stalemate over 415 Palestinians expelled from the occupied territories by Israel continued in South Lebanon Saturday, with no end in sight for the plight of the Palestinians stuck in a tent-camp with very little to protect them against freezing cold.

Both Israel and Lebanon are refusing to allow international aid for the group to pass through their territory. The Beirut government, whose stand is backed by the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), Saturday also turned down an appeal by the evictees to take in some of the sick among them.

On Friday, the Israeli cabinet rejected a request by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to allow relief supplies be sent to the Palestinians through Israeli territory (see page 2).

In other related developments: — The Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, said the Palestinians should stay put in

South Lebanon until Israel allows them to return to their homes. — Hundreds of Israelis marched in pouring rain in Tel Aviv Saturday to protest the expulsions.

— The ICRC rejected an Israeli charge that its actions were politically motivated. — A special envoy of United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Gbali was due in Israel Saturday to discuss the crisis and seek the implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 799 which calls on Israel to allow the expelled Palestinians to return to their homes.

— In what security sources described as apparent retaliation for Israel's expulsion of the 415 men, Palestinian guerrillas attempted to infiltrate its self-declared "security zone" for the first time in about six months.

Officials said Lebanon's position was unchanged since it returned sick or wounded evictees from a hospital in government-held territory Friday to their tent camp, hit by snowfalls on Saturday.

"Our position is quite clear. We feel for the Palestinians in their suffering but cannot permit them to

enter our territory under any circumstances," Prime Minister Rafik Al Hariri told Reuters. "Israel expelled them so they are Israel's responsibility."

Asked whether Lebanon would honour a request from the ICRC and the evictees to reconsider its decision, Mr. Hariri said: "Let them send the sick to Israeli territory."

The prime minister appealed Friday to President George Bush and President-elect Bill Clinton to urge Israel to take the Palestinians back and reverse its decision to bar relief supplies.

Israel turned down an ICRC request Friday to send through its lines clean drinking water, warm clothes, food and medicine to the group. Lebanon, has barred all supplies since Monday.

The 415 Palestinians, pawns in a battle of wills between Lebanon and Israel, spent a ninth day in exile milling around the muddy camp after a sleepless night in freezing temperatures.

They were expelled for their alleged links to two Islamic fundamentalist groups which Israel blames for recent attacks on its soldiers in the occupied West Bank and Gaza.

Security sources said militiamen from the Israeli-backed South Lebanon Army (SLA) opened fire on

guerrillas who crossed into the western part of the "security zone" about 55 kilometres from the camp. An SLA militiaman was wounded in the firefight. The body of a guerrilla was found with grenades, rifles and anti-tank mines near the scene of the ambush.

The sources said the dead man was from the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

In Geneva, a spokesman said the ICRC was still trying to help the evictees and dismissed an Israeli charge that its request to send aid through Israel's frontlines was political.

Spokesman Claude Voillat said the ICRC was seeking further talks with Lebanon and Israel which he charged were both violating the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 by refusing to allow in aid.

Zaid Wehbeh, sent to Beirut from Tunis as PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat's representative, backed Lebanon's decision to stop all aid from reaching them through its lines (see page 2).

But Omar Farwana, head of the evictees' medical team, urged the Lebanese government to take the ill and injured to hospital.

Mr. Farwana said the Palestinians appreciated Lebanon's stand of not

(Continued from page 2)



Wounded evictee Amjad Zamel Saturday sleeps among his fellow Palestinians in a tent camp in South Lebanon (AFP photo)

Arabs opt for U.N. diplomacy, seek Security Council action

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Arab parties to peace talks with Israel have for the moment opted for diplomacy rather than ultimatums in trying to resolve the crisis over the Jewish state's expulsion of 415 Palestinians, but are keeping their options open if such a strategy does not work.

The decision not to immediately link a resumption of the peace talks with an Israeli reversal of the expulsions was taken at a meeting Thursday in Cairo of the foreign ministers of Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt and the head of the foreign affairs department of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

However, the meeting called on the United Nations Security Council to set a deadline for

Israel to take back the expelled Palestinians, who are now stuck in a hillside in South Lebanon.

"It was decided that no immediate linkage be established between the peace talks and the expulsions," said a source close to the Cairo meeting. "However, it was made clear that there has to be tranquility and acceptable conditions for the peace talks to continue in line with the terms of reference that have been agreed-upon."

The source, who preferred anonymity, noted that the peace talks were under recess and were not expected to resume until after U.S. President-elect Bill Clinton takes over the White House on Jan. 20. As such, he said, a suspension of the talks would not have mattered much at this point in time.

PLO officials as well as senior

members of the Palestinian team to the negotiation said earlier that the Cairo meeting could come up with a decision to suspend Arab participation in the peace process if Israel did not permit the immediate return of the expelled Palestinians.

However, Egyptian leaders, including President Hosni Mubarak, called on the Palestinians to avert such a course of events. "Boycotting the negotiations will be a big mistake," Mr. Mubarak said Wednesday. "If we (the Arabs) break off the talks, there will be obstacles that could bring disastrous results."

The Arab delegations boycotted the final day of the eighth round of bilateral talks Israel 10 days ago in protest at the expulsions and no date was set for the

(Continued from page 2)

42 Israeli lawmakers back PLO contacts

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Two-thirds of the legislators in Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's ruling Labour Party support direct negotiations with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), according to survey results broadcast Saturday by Israel Radio.

The surprising results highlight the continuing erosion of Israel's refusal to deal directly with the organisation.

Last week, the cabinet for the first time in recent memory debated the issue. A majority of ministers opposed talking to the PLO, but their arguments were largely tactical, and several left open the door for negotiations with the PLO as a "terror" organisation.

But in recent months, the Muslim fundamentalist groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad have emerged as arch foes of Middle East peace negotiations, stepping up violent attacks to derail the talks.

After Israel expelled 415 Palestinians on Dec. 17 in a strike against Hamas and Islamic Jihad, dovish legislators demanded that Israel talk to the PLO to strengthen Palestinian who back the talks.

Out of 44 Labour members of parliament, 30 support direct negotiations with the PLO, according to the Israel Radio survey. In addition, the 12 legisla-

(Continued from page 2)

15-year-old Gazan shot dead

OCCUPIED GAZA (R) — An Israeli army sniper shot dead a 15-year-old Palestinian boy in the occupied Gaza Strip on Saturday, Palestinians said.

The army said a 15-year-old boy arrived at a hospital and died of injuries. It said it was checking the circumstances of the incident. Palestinians said Mohammad Zaatar, from the Shati refugee camp, and a second youth waited on the rooftop of a United Nations building in Gaza City to throw stones at passing army patrols.

An army sniper on a nearby shot Zaatar in the heart, the Palestinians said. The boy fell to the street and was taken to Shifa Hospital where he was pronounced dead.

The second youth said Zaatar was not throwing stones at the moment he was shot. "Zaatar's death raised to 12 the number of Palestinians killed by soldiers since Israel expelled 415 Palestinians to Lebanon on Dec. 17. Eighteen Palestinians have been killed in the Gaza Strip this month."

Most of those killed by soldiers were under 16 years of age. In Khan Younis on Wednesday an Israeli soldier shot dead Ismael Abdeen, 27, when he stepped on to his balcony during a curfew.

Palestinians in Gaza say the incidents indicate a change in the army's orders on opening fire. "For the last three weeks we have seen no teargas and no rubber bullets — only live

ammunition. Soldiers appear to be shooting without hesitation, shooting to kill," said one Gaza resident.

The army says standing orders have not changed, allowing soldiers to shoot only when their lives are in danger. Israeli authorities Wednesday lifted a 16-day curfew imposed on most of the Gaza Strip following Palestinian attacks in which five Israeli soldiers were killed.

Israel's unprecedented expulsion of the 415 Palestinians on Dec. 17 triggered a surge of Palestinian protests in the occupied territories.

Israelis have killed 982 Palestinians since the outbreak of the revolt against military rule began five years ago in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Hopes recede for last-minute changes in draft law on press

By Ayman Al Safadi
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Lower House of Parliament Saturday appeared less likely to reverse its position on the draft Press and Publication Law as a meeting of House bloc representatives failed to achieve consensus on a number of controversial articles in the draft legislation.

The chairman of the House's Judiciary Committee, Saleem Al Zoubi, said sharp differences prevailed in the meeting, which his committee called for with a view to arriving at a unified stand on the draft law before the House takes its final vote on it Sunday.

The outcome of the meeting dashed hopes that the House will vote in favour of cancelling some already-approved articles in the law, which is generally perceived as an "oppressive" legislation that will curtail the freedom of the press in the country.

The hopes were prompted by deputies who reported a wide support in the House for reversing some provisions of the draft law. The deputies based their assertions on discussions they had with other parliamentarians, who, they said, were influenced by the press's negative response to the draft law.

"Now it seems that there is not much hope" that the House will

change its vote on the already-approved articles, Mr. Zoubi told the Jordan Times after Saturday's meeting.

Mr. Zoubi said the deputies who attended Saturday's meeting were widely divided on Articles 5, which forces journalists to reveal their sources of information in a court of law. Article 2, which restricts recognition of journalists to members of the Jordan Press Association, and Article 42, which bans coverage of a range of political, economic and social issues.

The majority of the 18 deputies who attended the meeting,

(Continued from page 2)

Crack appears in Islamic Action Front

By Nermeen Murad
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Independent Islamists who joined hands with the Muslim Brotherhood movement to form the Islamic Action Front (IAF) are preparing for a break with the newly-licensed party following their defeat in Friday's party elections and subsequent accusations that the Brotherhood reneged on promises to give them proportionate representation on the 120-member consultative assembly.

The elections, which were held to elect the assembly as well as a 17-member executive committee, gave the independents only about 10 to 15 per cent of the seats — much smaller than they expected, according to estimates.

The IAF held its elections, according to a district division

of Jordan similar to that of the electoral system used in the Kingdom's national elections.

Several districts representing areas of Amman and suburbs gave total control to the Brotherhood despite earlier unwritten agreements that the independents be allocated roughly a third of the seats in all districts, according to several independent Islamists.

According to observers and analysts, the agreement to establish the IAF was partly to allow the Brotherhood to operate as a political party and to present a united Islamist front to the public.

Independent Islamists joined the IAF after receiving assurances that members of the Brotherhood would join the IAF as individuals and not as a movement. But "as it turned out the movement was obviously in full force in Friday's elections and it was not a competition among individuals," said one

of them. All of them spoke on condition of anonymity.

"This comes as proof that the Brotherhood movement and the IAF are two faces of the same coin and that the recruitment of notable independent Islamists to the front was only a trick to add legitimacy to the political decisions of the movement," the independent Islamist told the Jordan Times.

"The Muslim Brotherhood has shown us now that it has three faces," said another prominent independent Islamist. "It has a political face which is the IAF, a military face which is Hamas, and a social face which is the Muslim Brotherhood movement."

The general feeling among independent Islamists Saturday was of having been misled by the Brotherhood and many said they were going to resign from the IAF to try to create another Islamist political party.

One of them said that contacts were underway to start such a party under the name of Al Nasr which will include independent

Islamists who were elected in Friday's elections but who felt that their success was orchestrated by the movement as an attempt to ward off criticism.

"They (Muslim Brotherhood) made a big mistake on Friday," an independent Islamist who won a seat in Friday's elections told the Jordan Times. "They should have stuck to the original plan to ward off accusations by the critics that the IAF was just another play to allow the movement to operate politically."

The Brotherhood denies that there were any agreements with the independent Islamists but concedes that there was a pact among the members of the movement themselves to give at least a third of the seats to the independents. In response to the accusations, a Brotherhood deputy said that the percentages varied according to the districts and conceded that there was an obvious trend in some areas to leave the independents

(Continued from page 2)

Marines hit 3 Somalis in shootout

MOGADISHU (R) — U.S. Marines, in a fresh demonstration of their resolve not to let clan gunmen disrupt famine relief in Somalia, shot at and hit three Somalis in a pick-up truck after a gunman opened fire from the vehicle.

A U.S. military spokesman said Saturday no Marines had been hurt in the shoot-out near the town of Afgoi just west of Mogadishu Friday afternoon.

It was not clear whether the Somalis had been killed or wounded.

The incident coincided with indications that the U.N.-mandated multinational task force is toughening its attitude to Somalia's gun-toting gangs as more troops join the operation and spread into the starving interior.

"The Marines hit three of the occupants and the pick-up went off the road. In accordance with stated policy, (the Marine) convoy kept on going," said U.S. Navy Commander Jim Kudla.

The Marines had been returning to the capital from Baidoa, a main base for the U.S.-led famine-relief operation, when the white pick-up drove towards their convoy of about 12 vehicles.

"The Marines in the lead vehicle noticed a gunman sitting in the vehicle on top of the roof with an AK-47 (Kalashnikov) automatic rifle. He raised the weapon to his shoulder, fired and the Marines returned fire," said Cmdr. Kudla.

At least four Somalis have been killed and up to 17 wounded in shoot-outs and other incidents involving U.S. and French troops since the military relief effort, dubbed Operation Restore Hope, began on Dec. 9.

Task force commanders say it is not their job to disarm Somalia, awash with weapons from former Soviet-U.S. rivalry on the Horn of Africa and wrecked by two years of clan warfare since the overthrow of dictator Mohamed Siad Barre.

But U.S. military spokesman Marine Colonel Fred Peck said foreign forces were making "an aggressive attempt" to make their presence felt in areas they control as more troops arrived.

Hamas demands Arafat explanation

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Fence-mending efforts between the mainstream Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, launched with a meeting in Tunis last week, appeared to have hit a serious snag Saturday with Hamas taking up issue with Israeli media comments attributed to PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat.

According to a Hamas statement faxed to the Jordan Times, Mr. Arafat was quoted as saying by "the Zionist mass media" that the Israeli occupation authorities should have apprehended the killer(s) of Israeli border policeman Nissim Toledano, who was abducted and found killed, rather than expelling 415 Palestinians suspected of membership in Hamas and the Islamic Jihad group in retaliation.

The Hamas statement, apparently referring to comments made by Mr. Arafat in an interview with the Israeli newspaper Yedioth Aharnot, also said that the PLO chairman was quoted as saying that the assailant(s) should have been executed and that Hamas was in agreement with him over this issue since the killing of Toledano "contradicted Islamic teachings."

"What the media have referred to as an agreement between Mr. Arafat and Hamas to condemn,

the operation and call for the arrest and execution of those who carried it out is totally false," said the statement by Hamas, which has claimed responsibility for the abduction and killing of Toledano as well as a series of earlier attacks on Israeli security forces.

Hamas described the killing of the border policeman as a "heroic and honourable operation" and as a "legitimate act of holy war, accepted by all divine religions and international laws and norms."

"Our heroes... were resisting the Zionist military occupation of our country and was welcomed as such by all our Palestinian brothers, including Mr. Arafat himself," it added.

"We ask Mr. Arafat to explain what was attributed to him... and reveal the truth to clear the atmosphere and remove all doubts," it concluded.

There was no immediate explanation whether the Hamas leadership considered the comments attributed to Mr. Arafat serious enough to have a negative impact on the fence-mending process launched in Tunis last week. Hamas officials who attended the meeting were not due back in Amman until Sunday.

However, it reflected the fundamental differences between the moderate leadership of the PLO, which has endorsed the U.S.-led Arab-Israeli peace talks, and

(Continued from page 5)

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PLO manages to mend some Gulf ties

DUBAI (R) — A senior Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) official held talks with the Emir of Qatar Saturday in the first such visit since the group's apparent backing of Iraq in the Gulf crisis cost it the support of Arab states in the region.

"We did not discuss the Gulf war or touch upon the subject or its outcome," said PLO Executive Committee Chairman Yasser Arafat after his talks with Sheikh Khalifa Bin Hamad Al Thani.

All Gulf Arab states cut vital financial aid and political support to the PLO for appearing to side with Iraq in the 1990-91 Gulf crisis. "We will leave the negative effects of the Gulf war to clear with time. We are willing to wait and hope to improve ties with all Gulf Arab states in the near future," Mr. Arafat told Reuters by telephone from Doha.

Since the Gulf war last year, the PLO has been seeking to improve ties with oil-rich Gulf Arab states and has requested meetings with several Gulf Arab leaders.

"So far only Qatar and Oman have responded favourably. Mr. Arafat is due to fly to Muscat Monday."

Saudi Arabia, which alone gave the PLO more than 1 billion in the 12 years prior to Iraq's August 1990 invasion of Kuwait, has so far turned down PLO requests to send a team to the kingdom to normalise ties.

Gulf Arab states, including Qatar, deported thousands of Palestinian workers and businessmen during the Gulf crisis.

Mr. Arafat said he discussed bilateral ties with the Qatari Emir and explained the PLO's position on the 14-month-old Arab-Israeli peace talks after Israel expelled

415 Palestinians.

He did not say clearly if the PLO would order the Palestinian team to boycott bilateral talks with Israel.

"We see the expulsion as a big obstacle and their return in compliance with United Nations Resolution 799 will allow the peace process to continue," he said.

(Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin wanted to destroy the peace process with this measure.

Later, Hakam Bala'awi, the PLO's representative in Tunis and a member of the team visiting Doha, reiterated a call by the group for the United States to restore a dialogue severed in 1990.

"He stressed the need to restore the Palestinian-American dialogue, and on the highest level," the official Qatari News Agency (QNA) quoted Mr. Bala'awi as saying.

Mr. Bala'awi, also a senior member of PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat's mainstream Fatah group, led the Palestinian side in the dialogue with Washington which was held in Tunis.

"He sees that the considerations which led to severing the dialogue have ended," QNA reported.

Washington suspended the dialogue when the PLO failed to condemn an abortive attack on an Israeli beach in May 1990 by the Palestine Liberation Front (PLF) led by Mohammad Abbas.

At the time, the United States also called on Arafat to fire Mohammad Abbas from the PLO's Executive Committee. In September 1991, Mohammad Abbas resigned his seat and another PLF leader joined the Executive Committee.

Arafat endorses Lebanese position

BEIRUT (R) — An envoy of Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat Saturday backed the Lebanese government's decision to keep out 415 Palestinians expelled by Israel and to stop aid reaching them through its lines.

Zeid Wehbeh, sent to Beirut from Tunis on Friday, said that if Lebanon took the decision to keep out the Palestinians, it would mean that the Lebanese government was not receiving the (expelled) Palestinians and barring any contact with them, Mr. Wehbeh told Reuters.

"Keeping them where they are is an operation of political pressure. This pressure must be maintained by all means," he said.

"If the Israeli scheme succeeds, and the Israelis manage to create a 'security zone' in South Lebanon and expel more Palestinians, they have no drinking water and are short of food and medicine."

Lebanon has barred relief agencies from sending aid to a dumping ground for Palestinians from the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. On Monday, it barred relief agencies from sending them aid from the Lebanese side.

All the ministers who spoke after the meeting agreed the welfare of the Palestinians was now Lebanon's responsibility.

"I think the proposal by the Lebanese government and the red cross is a political move, not a humanitarian one," said Finance Minister Abraham Shohat.

But those opposed to the ban argued that Israel must be flexible.

"I think this is a mistaken decision," said Minister of Tourism and Religious Affairs Uzi Baram. "We would only have

Israeli ministers at odds in expulsion aftermath

TEL AVIV (R) — Signs of strain are emerging in the Israeli cabinet's fragile consensus on the expulsion of 415 Palestinians to Lebanon last week.

The cabinet at a special two-hour meeting Friday rejected a request by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to allow humanitarian aid through Israeli lines to the evacuees.

Six of the 16 ministers at the meeting voted against the ban.

"Because it is in any case possible to relay supply convoys from Lebanon directly to the tents, the Israeli government sees no reason to comply with the request of the Red Cross to have the convoys pass through the security zone," a government statement said.

The cabinet reached the decision as the evacuees began their second week in a freezing tent camp between Israel's self-declared "security zone" in South Lebanon and Lebanese army lines.

An ICRC representative said the Palestinians, alleged by Israel to be activists in militant Islamic groups behind attacks on Israeli soldiers, have no drinking water and are short of food and medicine.

Lebanon says it will not allow Israel to use its territory as a dumping ground for Palestinians from the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. On Monday, it barred relief agencies from sending them aid from the Lebanese side.

All the ministers who spoke after the meeting agreed the welfare of the Palestinians was now Lebanon's responsibility.

"I think the proposal by the Lebanese government and the red cross is a political move, not a humanitarian one," said Finance Minister Abraham Shohat.

But those opposed to the ban argued that Israel must be flexible.

"I think this is a mistaken decision," said Minister of Tourism and Religious Affairs Uzi Baram. "We would only have

demonstrated our magnanimity (by allowing the aid).

Among the cabinet members who voted against was Foreign Minister Shimon Peres. His opposition to the ban forced Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to call the rare Friday cabinet meeting. Mr. Peres refused to comment following the vote.

Mr. Peres was absent from the cabinet meeting last week in which ministers decided on the expulsions. He is thought to oppose the decision but has been careful not to criticise the government.

The three ministers of the left-wing Meretz bloc also voted against the ban Friday. The Meretz ministers supported the expulsion last week but have since expressed reservations over the process in which the decision was made.

"I made a mistake. The whole government, in this case should have discussed (the expulsion) in a different way," Meretz leader Shulamit Aloni told the daily newspaper Yedioth Ahronot Friday.

"We should have spent more time in the cabinet, despite the time pressure, receiving more information, reviewing all the options and possible chain reactions," Ms. Aloni said.

The result of Friday's vote — eight for the ban and six against with two abstentions — reflects the almost even balance between hawks and doves in the Rabin government.

This may prove critical in upcoming cabinet votes on aspects of the Middle East peace process, including the participation of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) in the talks.

The question of humanitarian aid to the evacuees through Israeli lines was not completely resolved Friday.

Israeli-Arab parliament member Abdul Wahab Darwish said after the cabinet meeting he had lodged an appeal with Israel's high court against the government decision.

Hopes recede for changes in draft law

(Continued from page 1)

however, agreed on abolishing Article 52 which prescribes punishments for journalists who violate the draft law. Thirty-two deputies were invited to the discussion but only 18 showed up.

Mr. Zoubi said he argued against forcing journalists to reveal their sources because such a provision will restrict the flow of information and the right of the people to know of sensitive issues while advocates of the article insisted that stipulating that the sources are revealed before courts gives journalists enough protection.

No information was available on the deputies' arguments for supporting the other articles or the different blocs' stands on the issue but one source said supporters of the law were "politically motivated."

Mr. Zoubi also said that some deputies argued that the House did not have the legal right to put to vote articles that had already been voted on. The Judiciary Committee chairman said he saw no such legal barriers.

House Speaker Abdul Latif Arabiyat told the Jordan Times it was unprecedented for the House to vote on articles that had already been approved, saying that it was possible to reopen debate on these articles only if

the vote on new ones at the time.

Accordingly, the House reconsidered Article 42 if it down Article 52 but will be able to reconsider other articles since they will not be affected by the changes.

In a clear change of tone last week when he expressed confidence the House would consider its stand on the draft law since it "is concerned producing a progressive law," Mr. Zoubi Saturday pointed some positive aspects of it saying these were "an improvement upon their predecessor."

The draft law will be sent to the Upper House of Parliament. The House approves it as become law when it is signed by His Majesty King Hussein.

Arabs opt for diplomacy over expulsions

(Continued from page 1)

resumption of the talks.

PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, who addressed the Cairo meeting after talks with Mr. Mubarak and Arab League Secretary-General Amr Abdul Meguid, appeared to have headed the Egyptian advice and stopped short of demanding that the Arab side announce a boycott of the peace talks, according to reports from Cairo.

The final statement of the meeting urged the Security Council to implement its Resolution 799, which condemned the Israeli

expulsion of Palestinians and demanded that the Jewish state allow the immediate return home of the expelled Palestinians.

The council "should work towards implementing its decision and set a deadline for Israel to take back the expelled Palestinians," the statement said, adding that the world body should use "measures stipulated in the U.N. charter" if the Jewish state did not comply.

It also called on U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Ghali to arrange a special envoy to stay on in the occupied territories to supervise the return of the 415 Palestinians.

No end in sight for Lebanon stalemate

(Continued from page 1)

allowing Israel to use it as a dumping ground for Palestinians expelled from the occupied territories, but he asked: "Must we all die?"

To Tunis, the Hamas movement said Saturday that the Palestinians should remain in South Lebanon until they can return home.

"They have no choice. They stay there or they return home," Mohammad Nazzari, spokesman for the Hamas delegation taking part in a PLO meeting in Tunis, told Reuters.

"This Israeli decision to reject Friday's ICRC request confirms our assessment that there was no difference between (Israeli Prime Minister

Yitzhak) Rabin and (his hardliner predecessor Yitzhak) Shamir, and even that Rabin may be harsher," he said.

"We know that the situation is very bad. The international community bears responsibility for what is happening," Mr. Nazzari said.

In Tel Aviv, hundreds of Israelis marched in pouring rain to protest against the expulsion.

The demonstration in Tel Aviv was organised by the left-wing Peace Now Movement.

An opinion poll published a day after the Dec. 17 expulsions, showed that 91 per cent of Israelis supported the decision.

42 Israeli lawmakers back PLO contacts

(Continued from page 1)

tors from the left-wing Meretz bloc back the idea.

This would bring to 42 the number of legislators in Mr. Rabin's ruling coalition who favour negotiations with the PLO. The coalition is backed by 62 legislators in the 120-member parliament. In addition, five Arab legislators who support the coalition from outside, also favour contacts with the PLO.

One Labour legislator cited the perceived Hamas threat as the reason for his change of heart.

"We have reached a situation in which it is preferable to negoti-

ate with the PLO to advance peace," legislator Shlomo Bobbot told the radio. "Otherwise, tomorrow we'll have to talk to Hamas which is something none of us wants."

Labour legislator Hagai Merom said he would call a Labour faction meeting this week to discuss the issue and hold a vote.

However, a change of government guidelines is unlikely in the near future because Mr. Rabin's ultra-orthodox coalition partner, the six-member Shas faction, opposes talks with the PLO.

Crack seen in Islamic Action Front

(Continued from page 1)

out. He denied that this was a decision by the leadership of the movement and maintained that it was the result of the individual choices of Brotherhood members in some of these districts who wanted to reaffirm the dominance of the movement in the party.

"The results in districts outside Amman, such as Irbid, showed clearly that there was no decision to oust the independents," another Brotherhood member said. In Irbid, four seats out of 12 were won by independents. "The problem lay in some districts in Amman where the movement wanted to keep all 'strong independent personalities' out," he added.

"The independents do not disregard this argument outright. Some of those interviewed explained that they understood that there was a camp within the movement which 'knew anyone who is not a member of the Ikhwan is a non-believer' and that these elements were able to influence results in areas such as Swella where only Brotherhood members won."

But they also point out that if the movement had taken a political decision to keep the quota of a third for the independents "even those entrenched in their worn-out ideas would have respected" such a step as one of them put it.

The most disturbing results of the Friday's elections for the independents was the failure of one of their most prominent members, Izzat Izzat, to win a seat representing one of Amman's districts. Mr. Izzat, who worked as a member of the 20-member preparatory committee of the IAF over the past year, was not elected Friday. His defeat added fuel to the criticism that the movement wanted to keep all "strong independent personalities" out.

The movement's moderate camp, according to one of its members, was equally distressed over Mr. Izzat's failure. "Perhaps a solution to this problem can be worked out at a later stage," one Brotherhood member told the Jordan Times. He said that Mr. Izzat's decision to run for the Fifth District, known among Brotherhood ranks as the territory of the "Swella hawkish group,"

was the reason for his failure. But Brotherhood members said that the independents were not to blame for Friday's results as they did not put their full weight behind their candidates and grew cases and depended on the support of the movement.

"He added that the movement should not be prejudiced by results of this first election as that independents should come to join the IAF to create a balance of forces with the movement."

"When the door for members is open again, they should come to register so that they can influence the elections next time," said Brotherhood activists.

In the meantime, the independent camp are awaiting the results of executive committee's election which were postponed on Friday the hope that a formula would be worked out giving independents equal-minority strength in a 17-seat committee. If not, a president who was in the Shas camp said "I will resign and work on the new party."

One of the movement's members counters this approach by saying that if new political parties are closed and they can be created their own party.

Kabul reported ready to hold key council

KABUL (R) — Afghan authorities said Saturday they had completed preparations for a key council meeting which could be convened in the next two days to elect a successor to interim President Burhanuddin Rabbani.

But Hardine Mujahideen leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar demanded Mr. Rabbani's removal before the Hal-o-Aqad council meeting and outlined three other proposals to break the political impasse.

Noorullah Emad, chairman of a central commission charged with preparing for and conducting the council, said it had completed its work and was awaiting Mr. Rabbani's announcement convening the meeting.

He told a news conference he hoped the council would meet within the next two days dismissing suggestions that most mujahedeen parties would boycott it. "Most parties have agreed and others will agree in time," he said.

Severo of the nine parties represented in the fractious leadership

council have expressed doubts about the electoral process, accusing Mr. Rabbani of bribing delegates.

Mr. Hekmatyar, in an interview released in Pakistan by the Afghan News Agency (ANA) run by his Hezb-e-Islami party, said the leadership council should choose a successor to Mr. Rabbani through consensus among Mujahedeen leaders.

If this proposal was not accepted, then a government of non-controversial figures should be formed to prepare the ground for general elections, he said.

"But the caretakers would not be allowed to participate in the elections and their sole obligation would be the holding of elections in the country in the shortest possible time," he said by radio from his base at Charasayab, south of Kabul.

As a third possibility, he proposed the transfer of presidential powers to Vice-President Mohammad Nabi Mohammadi with other government posts allocated by the leadership council.

Mr. Hekmatyar said Mr. Mohammadi could complete the process of the Hal-o-Aqad council.

"The un-elected and unrepresentative candidates whose loyalties had been purchased should immediately be removed and true representatives should be brought to shura (council) which could decide about the future leadership of the country and form the government," he said.

A Defence Ministry spokesman said Wednesday the Hal-o-Aqad council must be postponed to obtain support of the seven parties. "If these parties are suspicious they should check the personalities of the representatives," he said.

Mr. Emad said 1,335 delegates had already gathered in Kabul to choose Afghanistan's first president since the 1979 Soviet invasion.

The council was originally due to meet from 12 to 15 to elect a successor to Mr. Rabbani, whose term expired on Dec. 15. So far only two introductory sessions have been held.

White House vows to release Iran papers

WASHINGTON (R) — The White House promised in published remarks Saturday to release files countering charges President George Bush is hiding his role in the Iran-contra scandal by his pardon of former Defence Secretary Caspar Weinberger and others.

White House spokesman Martin Fitzwater told the Washington Post that Mr. Bush would make everything in his own files public.

Mr. Fitzwater said this would include the transcript of his five-hour 1988 interrogation by special prosecutor Lawrence Walsh as soon as it is returned to him by Mr. Walsh.

But the White House declined comment on Friday on Mr. Walsh's charge that Mr. Bush may have illegally withheld documents from his investigation.

Mr. Bush pardoned Mr. Weinberger and five other former government officials on Christmas Eve for any crimes committed in the Iran-contra scandal during the administration of President Ronald Reagan, in which Mr. Bush served as vice-president.

The scheme involving, among other things, illicit arms sales to Iran, aimed at evading a congressional ban on military aid to "contra" guerrillas fighting the leftist Sandinista government in Nicaragua.

Mr. Weinberger, Mr. Reagan's defence secretary, faced trial beginning on Jan. 5 on four criminal charges of lying in testimony to

congressional and criminal investigations.

In an angry denunciation of the Christmas Eve pardons, Mr. Walsh disclosed Thursday that his office learnt on Dec. 11 that Mr. Bush had notes about meetings in which matters relevant to his investigation had been discussed.

Mr. Walsh said the White House had failed to produce some of the notes to investigators despite repeated requests and suggested in a National Public Radio interview on Friday that he would demand them by subpoena.

In the interview with the Washington Post, Mr. Fitzwater said he had no knowledge of what was in Mr. Bush's notes. He said the request for them had come only when Mr. Walsh's prosecutors were preparing for the Weinberger trial.

"My understanding is that they were not asked for until the Weinberger case," he said.

Mr. Walsh said on Thursday that Mr. Bush's alleged withholding of notes constituted "misconduct" and would lead to appropriate action. He added Mr. Bush was now the subject of his investigation.

The pardons, just 27 days before Mr. Bush leaves office on Jan. 20, were the most controversial since Sept. 8, 1974, when President Gerald Ford pardoned his predecessor, Richard M. Nixon, in connection with the Watergate scandal.

movement had taken a political decision to keep the quota of a third for the independents "even those entrenched in their worn-out ideas would have respected" such a step as one of them put it.

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Death Announcement

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award me on that day - and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing. 2 Timothy 4:7,8

Dora Fletcher Whitman and members of the Evangelical Free Churches in Jordan announce the passing away at the age of 88 of

PASTOR LEROY FREDERICK WHITMAN.

The funeral service and burial will be conducted on Monday, 28th December, 1992, at 2:30 p.m. in the cemetery church.

Condolences will be received at their residence in Marka opposite Al-Rahmah Hospital on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday (28/12-30/12). Cable Address: P.O. Box 60, Amman, Jordan.

"The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, May the name of the Lord be praised."

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

17:30 Revue d'enfants
17:40 Jeux Sans Frontières
18:00 News French
18:15 Le Journal de l'histoire
19:30 News in Hebrew
20:00 News in Arabic
20:30 Family Matters
21:10 National Geographic
22:00 News in English
22:20 Law and Order

PRAYER TIMES

05:00 Fajr
06:29 (Sunrise) Dhuhr
11:30 Dhuhr
16:20 'Asr
16:40 Maghrib
18:00 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church, Swedish - Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 645990
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440

De la Salle Church Tel. 661757

Terrazas Church Tel. 622356

Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541

Anglican Church Tel. 630851, Tel. 771331

Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331

Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 771331

Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 771751

Armenian International Church Tel. 685326

Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 811285

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 622824, 654932

Church of the Nazarene Tel. 675691

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

A rise in temperatures will take place. It will be partly cloudy and rain is expected. Winds will be westerly moderate. In Aqaba it will be partly cloudy and rain is expected to fall. Winds will be northerly moderate and sea calm.

Amman Min./Max. temp. 0/7

Aqaba 4/16

Deposits 1/8

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Jordan Valley 5/14

Yesterday's high temperature: Amman 4, Aqaba 14. Humidity readings: Amman 58 per cent, Aqaba 43 per cent.

Yafa pharmacy 624425

Al Arafat pharmacy 777112

Al Azouzi pharmacy 888681

Hibana pharmacy 771957

Dr. Mohammed Al Tayal 273711

Bishops deliver Christmas message

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Christian community in Jordan Friday celebrated Christmas, despite the cold weather.

In a clear message, the bishops of the Holy Land, and its people living under occupation, and we tell them we are with you with our hearts," he said.

Bishop Al Murr wished His Majesty King Hussein good health and expressed his hope that peace would prevail in the Holy Land.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church Bishop in Jordan Naim Nassar said in his statement that the world needs the message of Jesus Christ now more than ever before. Bishop Nassar expressed hope that everyone will work in God's name so that peace would prevail throughout the Kingdom.

Low storms fail to materialise

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan missed the highest snow fall, 5 centimetres, according to an official from the Meteorology Department.

Weathermen now predict that the after-effects of the low depression over the Mediterranean will cause frost and rain throughout the Kingdom. The weather will continue to be cold, partly cloudy but a slight rise in temperatures is expected.

HOME NEWS IN BRIEF

Government officials talk to landslide victims

AMMAN (J.T.) — Upon the directives of Prime Minister Sharif al-Bashir, the Secretary General of the Ministry of Public Works and Social Development, Jordan Valley Authority Secretary General, and Balqa Governor, Saturday paid a visit to Al Ajlun area in Arida sub-district where landslides were reported in this month. The officials met with citizens and listened to the complaints of the landslides which took place in the hills overlooking the southern part of Zarqa river. They were told about the damage caused and plans drawn up to cope with future landslides.

Ministry committee to meet with dairy farmers

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Agriculture Committee of the Lower House of Parliament will meet Sunday with cow breeders and dairy products factories. The meeting, to be chaired by Mr. Muhammad Al Alawneh, will discuss problems facing dairy farmers and industrialists in the dairy business.

Lebanese university presidents meet

AMMAN (J.T.) — Yarmouk University President Ali Mahfaza Saturday with Lebanese University President Mohammad Al Majidi. The meeting discussed scopes of scientific and cultural cooperation between the two universities. Mr. Majidi, will deliver a lecture at the university on "the use of water as a resource in the Arab region."

Youth Forum to host debate on political party legalisation

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Arab Youth Forum will host Tuesday a debate by Lower House member Hussein Majali on "the legal status for legalising political parties."

National donates generous sum to Zarqa University

AMMAN (J.T.) — The royal commission for Zarqa state university received Saturday a generous donation from Saudi businessman Samir Shamma. The contribution will be used in the construction process of the university. Mr. Shamma had previously contributed to equipping the computer centre at Mu'ta University, the establishment of a training hall at the University of Jordan's Law Faculty and the University's medical halls plan, in addition to the establishment of the Shamma Scholarship for Islamic coins.

Meeting for mosque preachers held at Jerash

JERASH (J.T.) — A meeting for mosque preachers and imams held last week in Jerash district. The meeting dealt with the religious preaching law. Director of Jerash Waqaf and Islamic Affairs Department Mustafa Al Utom stressed at the meeting the need to fully abide by the new law, and called on preachers to prepare fully Friday sermons. He also urged preachers to tackle local issues and citizens problems in their sermons.

Work on relief works held at Princess Rahma College

JERASH (J.T.) — A seminar on relief works and emergency response started Saturday at Princess Rahma Social Services Centre in Allan area. The week-long seminar will include seminars by officials on relief works in emergency situations. Forty staff from departments of social development around the district are participating in the seminar.

Ministry of Tourism and RJ to hold reception for Japanese tourists

AMMAN (J.T.) — The first group of Japanese tourists will arrive in Amman today aboard a Royal Jordanian plane. The group will be treated to a grand reception at Queen Alia International Airport, organised by the Ministry of Tourism and the Royal Jordanian. The ministry has started to direct special attention to Japanese tourists, in view of their great desire for travel, according to ministry sources. The sources estimated the number of Japanese tourists at more than 10 million saying that average Japanese tourist expenditure is one of the highest in the world.

WHAT'S GOING ON

EXHIBITIONS

Painture exhibition by Mona Sandi at Al Balqa Art Gallery in Al Balqa.

Exhibition of paintings by artist Kamal Al Jawhari at Housing Bank Complex Art Gallery.

Exhibition of arts by Iraqi artist Mohammad Hossein Jodi and Sherkat Al Alousi, at the Royal Cultural Centre.

Exhibition of paintings by Rina Tarazi at the Royal Cultural Centre.

Arab Parliamentary Union to discuss deportee issue in Amman

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Arab Parliamentary Union (APU) convenes in Amman on Tuesday to discuss the deportation to South Lebanon of 415 Palestinians from the occupied territories. The meeting, to be chaired by the Syrian Peoples Assembly Speaker Abdul Qader Qaddoura, who is chairman of the APU will be held at the request of the Jordanian Parliament which issued invitations to all the fourteen member countries to attend this extraordinary meeting to discuss the deportees' crisis. Lower House of Parliament Speaker Abdul Latif Arabiyat said in a statement that 11 out of the 14-member Arab states of the APU have agreed to attend the meeting. Dr. Arabiyat said that the Parliament will present a working paper on the deportees and the Palestinian question. He stressed that the issue requires Arab attention at the highest level and he called for a unified Arab stand. Arab Parliamentary delegations taking part in the meetings will start arriving in Amman Monday, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.



Revealing an age gone by: An excavator cleans decorated walls on an archaeological dig

Stone Age settlement revealed

AMMAN (Petra) — The fifth season of archaeological excavations in the Tell Abu Hamid site in the northern Jordan Valley have revealed that early human settlements in the area date back to the early stone age, 5,500-4,000 B.C.

The excavations, conducted by archaeologists, anthropologists along with students from Yarmouk University, the National French Institute for Scientific Research, the French Institute for Near East Antiquities and the department of antiquities, uncovered circular human shelters built of stone and bricks.

Small houses with rectangular rooms were also discovered at the site with painted walls. Excavations in the houses revealed that they contained small fire places used for heating and cooking in the front yards. The inhabitants are believed to have kept fresh water in large pits covered with plaster and it is thought that they relied heavily on breeding cattle and pigs which required travelling in search of pasture lands.

Evidence found at the site proves that Tell Abu Hamid inhabitants planted olive trees and used to store food supplies in big jars. Their pottery was decorated with rare coloured paintings and they made small statues of pottery resembling birds and animals.

Members of the excavation team taught students in the nearby village on the history of the Tell Abu Hamid site and methods of conserving antiquities.

Al Ahd Party voices support for peace and democracy

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordan had no choice but to go to the peace talks, Abdul Hadi Al Majali, the secretary general of Al Ahd Party, said in an interview with Al Ra'i daily published Saturday. Mr. Majali, an ex-army general and former head of the Public Security Department said Jordan would have been severely punished had it abstained from the peace process, and his party fully supports the peace negotiations.



Abdul Hadi Al Majali

In a wide ranging interview with the Arabic daily Mr. Majali spoke of his party as a pan-Arab national Islamic party that aims to serve Jordanian society and seeks to strengthen the relations between Jordanians and Palestinians who have two different political aspirations. His party, he said, recognises that the only mechanism to attain Arab unity is by practicing freedom and democracy.

Mr. Majali said that people generally have a misconception of the political parties; "Parties are established to serve the society and develop it, hence there's a difference between opposition parties and parties that want to topple the regime. Parties are still seen in the context of the 1950's parties which were suspended in 1957."

He rejected the notion that democracy was introduced only in 1989. "I believe Jordan was democratic before that date," he said, pointing to professional unions elections held before that date as evidence. Mr. Majali also dismissed the perception that his party was sectarian.

"We are constitutionalist," Mr. Majali said. "The constitution forbids us of being sectarian." Jordanian nationalism should proceed pan-Arabism because nationalism includes all segments of society, he added. "We aspire for Arab unity but since the old ideology failed, we need a different instrument. Freedom and democracy should be based on the new thinking that prevails, and in this way we differ from pan-Arab parties," he said.

The peace process was a prudent choice that took into consideration the Arab and international circumstances. "The peace process defends Jordan and the decision to participate was solely made by Jordanians," he said.

Al Ahd party foresees four bases for the Jordanian-Palestinian relationship: Inten-

sive support for the Palestinian cause and the Palestinians' right to self-determination; recognition of the Palestinian state and the Palestinian political identity. Palestinian extension in Jordan is part of the social composition of Jordan, hence the choice of future unity between the people of Jordan and Palestine; but "we should differentiate between the Palestinian political entity and the Jordanian political entity, therefore, Palestinian political parties should not interfere in the politics of Jordan. One has to choose between being a full Jordanian citizen or a faction within the PLO," Mr. Majali said.

He indirectly criticised the Muslim Brotherhood Movement by saying that they have chosen to formulate the Islamic Action Front in order for the movement to stay mobile and not subject to the political parties laws.

Another controversial issue discussed was the Al Tamimi family council. Mr. Majali said that thirty six families in the council claim to be descendants of Tamim Bin Awad Al Dani. It is a social grouping not a political one that is tied by the bonds of history, religion and the holy land, he said, and he rejected rumors that some east-Jordanians resigned from the party after he was named chief of the council.

Asked about his role as security chief during the April riots in the south of Jordan and before that when the security forces stormed the Yarmouk University campus where four students were killed, he said that his forces were abiding by the country's laws and regulations.

High hopes for higher salaries

By Ayman Al Safadi Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Finance Committee at the Lower House of Parliament will recommend that the government substantially raise the salaries of government employees, committee chairman Abdullah Akaileh said Saturday.

Dr. Akaileh said the committee decided to make the recommendation in light of the grave decline of the purchasing power of employees' income and expressed optimism that the government will react positively to the recommendation.

"We felt that the government will seriously and positively study the proposal" to raise the salaries of its employees, he said. Announcing that the committee will present its report on the draft



Abdullah Akaileh

budget to the House Wednesday. Dr. Akaileh praised the draft law as an improvement upon its predecessors, indicating that the committee has introduced minor amendments to the draft law. However, Dr. Akaileh said

that some ministries and government agencies failed to efficiently implement infrastructural projects of the 1992 budget.

The deputy singled out the Ministry of Health and the Water Authority for failing to execute certain projects and attributed the shortcoming to "administrative loopholes and inefficiently of administration staff of some ministries."

Dr. Akaileh also said he was satisfied with the government's proposals for countering unemployment in the coming fiscal year, pointing out that the draft budget allows for the creation of 20,000 new jobs.

"Dealing with unemployment is like dealing with foreign debts, you cannot completely get rid of them but you can reduce them," he said.

Ministers deny reports that journalism courses are to be stopped

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Higher Education Awad Khleifat Saturday denied foreign news reports that the Council of Ministers had decided to stop teaching journalism at Jordanian universities and colleges.

"Such news reports are totally baseless and no side can issue such a decision except the universities and colleges themselves because they are fully independent," he said.

Dr. Khleifat said the government has nothing to do with managing the universities or colleges, private or public. It is up to the educational institutions themselves to cancel, start or expand any academic specialisation, he said.

Information Minister, Mahmoud Al Sharif also denied any knowledge of such news reports, saying the cabinet did not discuss such an issue in its meetings.



Dr. Awad Khleifat

Yarmouk University is the only

Jordanian university to offer journalism courses. Community colleges in Jordan stopped teaching the subject in 1988.

A foreign-based newspaper has published a report saying that the cabinet has decided to stop teaching journalism in Jordanian universities and colleges. The newspaper said the decision, which was taken upon a recommendation by the ministry of higher education and information includes also universities and colleges in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

Dr. Khleifat said that West Bank universities and colleges are fully independent from the Ministry of Higher Education, and the only relationship between them is that the council ratifies their certificates and results of their exams.

Al Bashir hospital hosts workshop

AMMAN (Petra) — A week-long workshop on medical rehabilitation and physiotherapy was held at Al Bashir hospital Saturday. Addressing the opening session, on behalf of the health minister, Dr. Samir Al Kayed, acting director of Bashir Hospital, said the workshop aims at training students working in physiotherapy and rehabilitation. He pointed out that the workshop is part of the Ministry of Health's policy to develop and upgrade

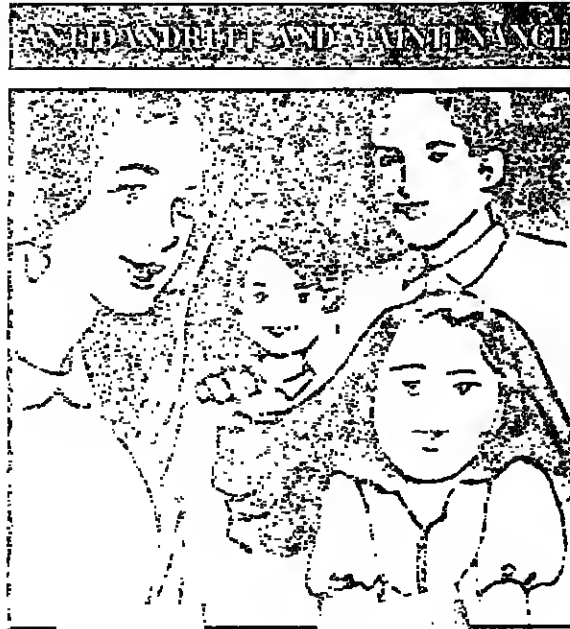
health services, and give health staff the chance to benefit from training courses. He noted the important role played by the local community, youth centres, and teaching cadres, who complement the role of the ministry. He stressed the ministry's interest in developing its curative and preventive services and to expand their outreach to cover all citizens.

Head of the Rehabilitation section at Bashir Hospital Khalil

Hamed said medical rehabilitation is closely linked with social and vocational rehabilitation.

He said that the Ministry of Health has done its best to expand medical rehabilitation services to cover all governorates, through the establishment of medical rehabilitation units in the various hospitals.

The workshop is organised by the Ministry of Health in cooperation with the World Health Organisation.



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Sunday's Economic Pulse

Expatriates' remittances set to rise

AT ONE time in the past we used to exaggerate the relationship between the volume of incoming remittances from Jordanian expatriates working abroad and the general situation of the oil economies of the Gulf states. Officials in charge of the Jordanian economy found it very convenient to blame external factors for their shortcomings, such as economic recession in the oil-producing countries of the Gulf, because this external factor is not controllable by Jordan and, accordingly, we can do nothing about it.

The current experience has proven, beyond doubt, that the volume of remittances made by our Jordanian expatriates abroad is more influenced by the state of affairs of the Jordanian economy itself, and the degree of public confidence prevailing at a particular time. What did not show up of expatriates' remittances when the Jordanian economy was in crisis was actually deposited with foreign banks outside Jordan. That explains why the expatriates' savings abroad grew fast after 1988.

Now that the Jordanian economy has stabilised, restored confidence, and proved that it is finally on the right track and that the commitment to reform the economy and remove the

distortion is genuine, we find that the remittances have not only got back to their previous levels, but also exceeded those levels at rates beyond the imagination of even the most optimistic analysts.

During the current year, 1992, the expatriates transferred an estimated amount of \$1.3 billion. The experts of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) reckoned that some \$700 million of the above amount represents regular remittances from Jordanian expatriates still working in the Gulf states. The rest represents previous savings, which may come to the country only once, to be invested in real estate, industry, services, or deposits of foreign exchange in the domestic banking system.

The above figure does not include indirect remittances, in the form of import financing, including cars, furniture and material needed for construction by expatriates building their own houses and who had to draw on balances maintained abroad. The overall figure for amounts remitted directly and indirectly in cash and in-kind could be close to \$1.5 billion.

The above shows that remittances and working abroad will continue to play a major role in boosting the Jordanian economy

and financing the balance of payments. This is a fact in political decision-makers should appreciate very well in order to take note of the economic cost of political decisions and consequences and uncalculated risks.

In this respect, we point out that incoming remittances stand at around one billion dollars a year during the first half of the 1980s. Remittances dropped to \$500 million in 1990 and \$400 million in 1991, before they bounced back and made the jump in 1992 as a result of a higher degree of confidence in and its present and future stability.

It is, of course, difficult to identify accurately and account savings which are not renewable and distinguish them recurring remittances. However, it is only realistic not to put many savings in 1993. The IMF experts predicted that savings may be in the order of \$600 million in 1992, \$719 million in 1991, and \$112 million in 1990.

Most likely, the regular remittances are set to rise at a rate lower than the rate of growth in gross domestic product (GDP), thus maintaining their relative importance to the economy a balance of payments.

Hope to follow despair

U.S. PRESIDENT George Bush is ending his term with a warning to President-elect Bill Clinton not to turn isolationist and not to intervene militarily in any given situation unless certain conditions are met. Those are: The stakes should be sufficiently high; the U.S. intervention should be effective and decisive; and the casualties among civilians should not rise above the number of civilians sought to be saved.

There should be no problem about Bush's preachings against isolationism for indeed being the only remaining superpower on Earth, just as there is no way that Washington could shun away from its international obligations even if it wanted to. Where we would take issue with Bush is over his criteria for his country's military intervention on behalf of international law, justice and war crimes. For one thing, and judging by his action in the Gulf crisis in 1990-91, and inaction in the Bosnian situation, some of us could be at a loss trying to reconcile President Bush's edicts for the future U.S. president with his record on these two specific situations. For another thing, and given the fact that hundreds of thousands of people had lost their lives in the process of reversing militarily the Iraqi invasion and occupation of Kuwait and keeping in mind that hundreds of thousands of Bosnian Muslims and Croats were butchered by Serbian military and paramilitary forces because Bush refused to move an effective finger, the outgoing president's words sound hollow and hypocritical. Of all people, the new U.S. president should know better than follow blindly in the footsteps of his predecessor. After all, Clinton won the U.S. presidential elections on a ticket that vows to change and amend the ways of the incumbent Republican administration rather than perpetuate them. If Bush seeks to perpetuate his ways of governing beyond his term, he may well be in for a rude shock. Bush has effectively forfeited his right to tell others how to run his country after his people found him wanting in more than one way. Besides, the U.S. as well as the world needs a fresh start and a new U.S. outlook on issues and conflicts. And there is therefore high expectations that the new president will apply this new perspective worldwide, be it in Bosnia or the Middle East or elsewhere in the world.

While history will most certainly hold Bush and his team of close advisers responsible and accountable for all their actions and inactions, it has yet to pass a judgement on the new American president and his administration. There is conviction in many parts of the world that the new political landscape will end the suffering in many regions of the world and replace it with hope and salvation.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

THE AMERICANS British and French are demanding that Iraq facilitate the arrival of food supplies to the Kurdish people in the north, but they ignore the people of the central and southern regions of the country who are subjected to sufferings resulting from the unjust sanctions, said Al Za'at Saturday. The paper said the world realises that President George Bush, who is spending his last, desolate days at the White House, can do nothing except issue threats against the Iraqis. He is trying to find solace for himself now that he has been rejected by the American people as a murderer, said the daily. At the same time, in Britain, Prime Minister John Major is being confronted by one scandal after another threatening to throw him out of office, while the French are in no better position, being completely under the American influence, with the result that France is finding itself getting no reward by aligning itself behind Washington, the paper added. It said that if the calls for helping the Iraqi Kurds in the north are sincere, then other sincere efforts should be directed towards aiding the Iraqis in the central and southern regions, who are deprived of their rights as humans. While the threats are being directed against Iraq, the world watches with deep pain the plight of the 400 Palestinians deported to Lebanon and now stranded at the border exposed to severe weather, hunger and thirst said the daily. It said that the western countries dare not issue a threat against Israel, which is defying the world community and refusing to implement U.N. Security Council resolutions.

SAWT AL SHAAB daily openly accused the United States of being behind the deportation of the Palestinians from their homeland Washington's passive stand with regard to the deportees can only prompt us to believe that it is the U.S. administration which is strengthening Israel's arm in this matter and encouraging the Jewish state to defy the world community and reject U.N. Security Council Resolution 799, said the daily. The paper said that while the United States keeps bragging about human rights and moves rapidly towards condemning nations that tend to oppress their population and commit aggression, it stands mute now, showing no sign of protest against the Israeli actions and maltreatment of Palestinian people. Israel has just announced its determination to block the Red Cross attempts to provide food supplies and drugs to the deported Palestinians and continues to hold on to its rejection of U.N. resolutions, the paper said. It added that against this outrageous defiance of the world community, neither the United States nor Europe is doing anything. The paper said while the Arab foreign ministers meeting in Cairo appeal to the U.N. Security Council to force Israel to rescind its decision and repatriate the Palestinian deportees, the world community is looking on without lifting a finger to help. It said that in the face of these developments, one could expect the Security Council to openly declare its impotence and its total failure to deal with this matter and any other matter connected to the Middle East question.

Rabin's iron fist hands advantage to Arabs

By Martin Woolacott

HISTORY TURNS up strange parallels all the time, but that which links the trio of Hagana, Irgun and the Stern Gang in the Palestine of 1947 with the three-some of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), Hamas and Islamic Jihad in the Palestine of 1992 is one of the most ironic. Neither Jews nor Arabs would relish the comparison. But, in both cases mainstream organisations and extremists — rivals over means and ends — reinforce each other in their actions, not least because of the mistakes of the occupying power.

Certainly Israel this week has taken decisions which will strengthen all of its Palestinian adversaries, the PLO at the negotiating table, Hamas and the Jihad on the streets. The Rabin government is going to pay a high price for the antediluvian measure of deporting over 400 Hamas activists, the most severe collective punishment in the 25 years of the occupation. The deportations now constitute an "international incident," in a way that the many which came before did not. It is not just that they were disastrously handled by Israel, with blindfolded men held on buses, and later, in Lebanon no man's land, with the crippled and the sick hobbling along under chilly rain. They could have been done in a more civilised way and still the world would have instantly recognised that there was a dimension of political error and moral misjudgment to these deportations that was new. When the Lebanese government decided it would not play the deportation game, it did so against the background of an international response which was not so much one of revulsion as a rejection of Israeli solutions that no longer work at any level.

The peace talks are too important to the United States, to Europe, to the Arab states, and indeed to Israel, for their collapse to be accepted. That means, quite simply, that because of the Hamas deportations, the Israelis now need the PLO even more than they did before as a negotiating partner. It was already the

case that the likely result at the end of the peace process — a small Palestinian state with limited powers and resources — was beginning to lose lustre in advance. How could such an entity fully satisfy the material needs and the political aspirations of Palestinians? The Israelis will now have to make greater concessions, on the substance of the powers of an interim administration and also on the issue of recognition, dropping the tired fiction that they cannot negotiate directly with the PLO.

The Israeli maxim, repeated endlessly over the last couple of days by ministers, that Israel will fight the intifada "as if there were no peace negotiations" and negotiate "as if there were no intifada" is patent nonsense. Israel may try to pursue that policy, certainly, but nobody else will or can do so. The PLO

cannot ignore the plight of any Palestinians, even if they belong to a rival organisation, unless it wants to be transformed into a collaborator. Nor can it forthrightly condemn the Hamas armed campaign when its own position is that the armed struggle continues in tandem with the peace process. The harsh daily reality of occupation in the West Bank and Gaza means that any party which rules out violent action in theory — even if it has largely abandoned it in practice — would be cutting its own political throat.

The argument which the PLO has been insistently repeating to the Israelis ever since negotiations began a year ago, that it needs swift and substantial concessions if it is not to lose ground irrevocably to its more extreme rivals, will now be greatly strengthened. It will undoubtedly now

gain at the negotiating table. But Hamas, assisted by the Israelis on to the centre stage as their principal physical antagonist, will also gain, even as the PLO makes diplomatic headway.

Hamas is by no means a formidable military organisation. It is quite possible that the ambushes and kidnaps which have convulsed Israel were the work of no more than two small secret gangs, just as Irgun and Stern came down to a handful of gunmen in the end. But they were enough to push Rabin into using the blunderbuss of mass deportation, prompting some Israeli papers to ask yesterday what happens when the next policeman or soldier is killed. Expend 800, 800?

There are double and triple games going on here, just as there were back in 1947. Hamas is formally opposed to the negotiations, to the interim autonomous

administration, and to a Palestinian state on anything less than all the territory between the Jordan and the sea. Indeed it is only two months since it joined an alliance with other rejectionist groups to "confront and foil the plan for internal autonomy." But its more pragmatic leaders, everyone knows, would think long and hard, for instance, before boycotting the elections that would be part of the settlement process. They want their share of power in both an interim administration and in a Palestinian state. And, although Hamas and Fateh men have occasionally shot it out, Hamas is still technically an applicant for membership of the PLO, an application which its demand for 40 per cent of the seats in the National Council has stalled.

Yasser Arafat, the PLO chairman, recently turned up for talks with Hamas people in Sudan and

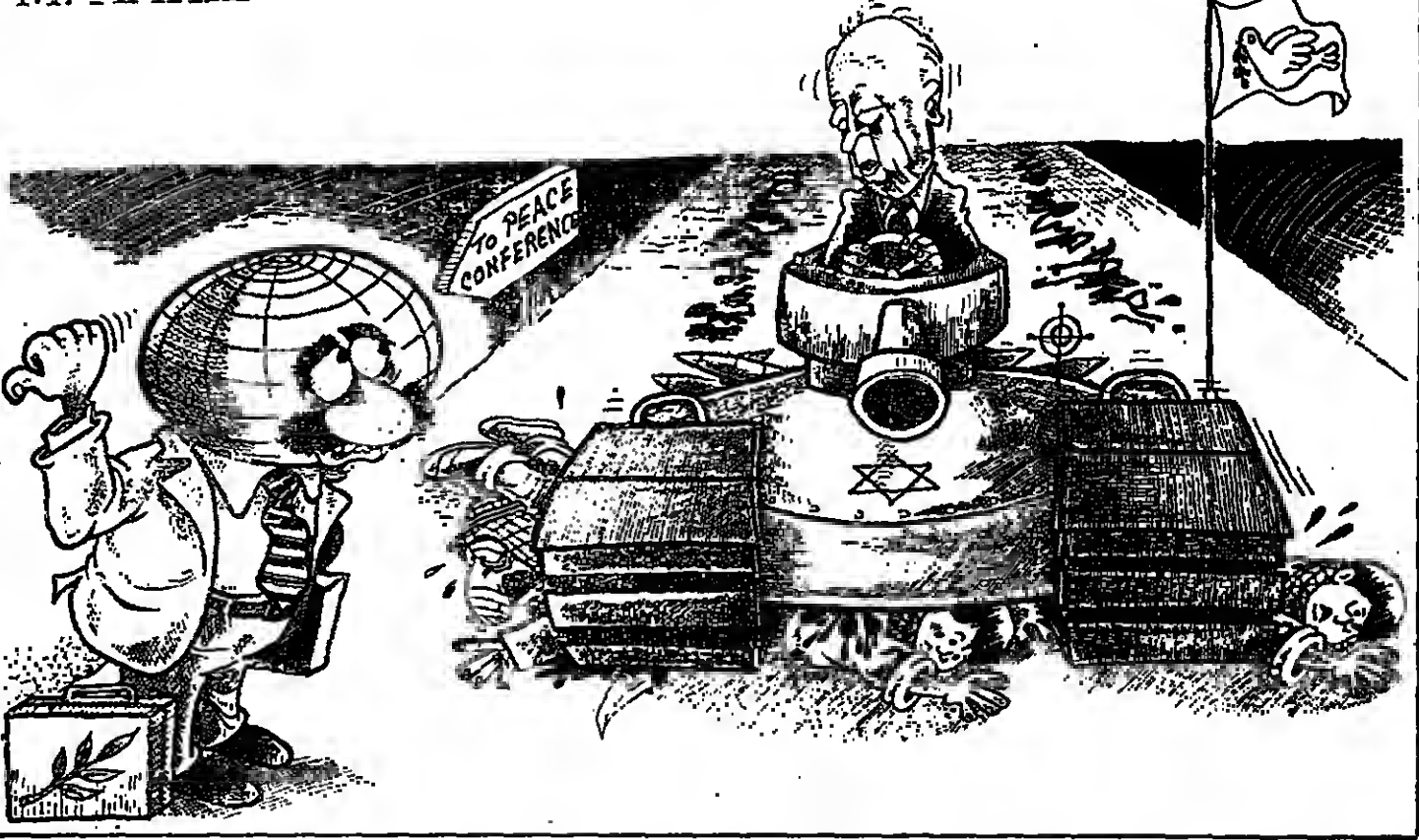
was snubbed when he appeared, but relations between the PLO and Hamas are entirely hostile.

Some argue that it stumbled into a conundrum which could be a turning point in the moment when the fundamentalism, given strength throughout the since the Gulf war, challenge not only the establishment, but also the establishments of Arab and those powers, above United States, which impose secular order in the region.

The gradual shift towards fundamentalist forces is able, but it is a complex process. What is called fundamentalism is a plural phenomenon the dividing line between nationalist movements, Fateh, which have always Islam, with deliberate as part of their general and religious movements, Hamas, which have some as well as religious inspired not a clean one.

The reality is that the success is generally seen. The armed struggle with Palestinian support with an "appropriate" position changed for votes. But success for the PLO will both votes and, if it sees greater armed presence PLO's gain is not all Hamas's loss, and vice versa. That is why the Rabin's intent is unlikely to be to make a policy of Yes to No to Hamas, prevail. He is dealing with what, in a could become the Labor Likud of the future, Palestine, that ought not to surprise it. If they had yes in 1985 when Arafat sent signals of readiness to go on a two-state basis, the might have had a chance of ending the extreme Palestinian, whether its rejection was religious or secular. It is the mother of trouble in the Middle East, a principle worth recalling to the today — The Guardian.

M. KAHIL



Israel goes to war to make peace

By Eileen Alt Powell
The Associated Press

JERUSALEM — Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has declared war on the Muslim fundamentalist Hamas movement, arguing the move will lead to peace. But his many critics call his opening gambit a major blunder.

The expulsion last week of 415 suspected Palestinian activists has widespread support in the Jewish state, where the majority blames Islamic extremists for a growing list of fatal attacks on soldiers and civilians.

But internationally, the move has drawn some of the harshest criticism Israel has faced in years, including a unanimous resolution by the U.N. Security Council that

"strongly condemns" the deportations and demands repatriation of the men.

As television and newspaper photos relay the drama of the Palestinians stranded in a freezing strip of southern Lebanon and turned back by gunfire as they try to return home, Israel has begun a campaign of damage control.

The foreign ministry said Monday that it will call in the ambassadors of western nations to explain Israel's position.

Meanwhile, Rabin said he would not bend.

"In contrast to the tear jerking images on today's TV screens, we are not talking about a group of righteous men," he told parliament in response to a no confidence

motion Monday. "We are talking about one of the most murderous groups that ever walked the earth."

He said Hamas was dedicated to killing Jews, destroying Israel and "preventing at any price the expected peace, which will come."

The Palestinian delegation to the Middle East peace talks, which is advised by the Palestine Liberation Organisation, has announced that it is "suspending" its participation until the deportees have returned home.

There also are signs that Hamas may send a delegation for consultations at PLO headquarters in Tunis. Reconciliation with Hamas, which opposed the peace

talks from the start, could harden the PLO's resolve to stay away.

In the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, the expulsions have set off riots in several refugee camps, and at least eight Palestinians have died in army fire. Thousands of Palestinians are confined to their homes by army curfews, fueling further hostility.

In Israel, the supreme court has become entangled in what is essentially a political debate.

While the deportees sat in buses at the frontiers with Lebanon last Thursday, the court went along with the government's decision to circumvent the normal appeals process and expel the Palestinians without hearings.

But the justices said the gov-

ernment must show the legality of its move within 30 days.

Civil rights attorneys have petitioned the court to get the deportees back.

In the parliament debate on Monday, Benjamin Netanyahu of the opposition Likud bloc accused the left centre "Rabin government of acting 'in a panic.'"

"You deported and in return you got the court system caught up in complications and you led the country into a political and public relations mess," said Mr. Netanyahu, a leading contender for the chairmanship of the right wing Likud.

Mr. Rabin argues that his critics are overreacting.

He points out that the expul-

sions are for two years, normal indefinite term.

Families will be allowed to special military committee

behalf of their relative, those deported in error returned, Mr. Rabin says.

The prime minister is expected to work the peace talks because he is expected to resume until the inauguration of U.S. President Clinton on Jan. 20.

As political analyst Sissi Rolet wrote in the Jerusalem Post: "The world will be seeing the 415 (Palestinian) Herling in Red Cross tents, Arab land in an Arab occupation with plenty of food, blankets, warm clothes, newspapers and other necessities."

The Sunday Times.

Fundamentalists criticise Saudi royal family

By Marie Colvin

SAUDI ARABIA has been thrown into an open struggle between the ruling Al Saud family and the increasingly powerful religious establishment. King Fahd has been forced to make the unprecedented move of dismissing more than half the country's religious council because of its implicit support for a petition criticising his rule.

King Fahd's step underlines the growing pressure from puritanical religious fundamentalists who want Saudi Arabia run in accordance with strict Islamic law. The seven dismissed members of the

Council of Senior Ulama, the highest religious body, had used illness as an excuse for not attending a meeting called to condemn the petition, which had been signed by 107 leading businessmen and clerics.

After months of waiting, the Saudi monarch finally sent a message two weeks ago saying that they were clearly too ill to perform their duties. He then named 17 clerics to replace them and broaden the council.

Though King Fahd is an absolute ruler, his political legitimacy is based on his claim to rule an Islamic society. Several years ago he changed his official title to

Guardian of the Two Holy Shrines, Mecca and Medina, Islam's holy cities.

The king appoints and pays the council, but he cannot afford to ignore its views. The council interprets the Koran — the constitution of the land — and makes religious pronouncements. In the past he has used it to validate his decisions.

Confrontations have risen between Al Saud family and Wahabists, followers of Saudi's powerful puritanical strain of Islam. This latest upsurge of religious extremism dates back to the Gulf war, when King Fahd allowed 500,000 allied troops into Saudi

Arabia. Ultra-conservatives opposed the presence of "foreign infidels."

Until the dismissals, King Fahd had been trying to placate the orthodox strain, giving greater authority to the religious police and refusing to allow women to drive cars. But the petition was a virtual declaration of religious war.

It demanded changes in Saudi society in line with Islamic law and criticised the government for corruption, accusing it of wasting billions of dollars to fund "atheistic regimes."

It also attacked the kingdom's foreign policy for accommodating "interests of western govern-

ments."

The authors blamed the government for the "total chaos of the economy and society, administrative corruption, widespread bribery, favouritism and the extreme feebleness of the courts."

It also lambasted the lack of political freedoms and "torture by security and police."

When the government refused permission for the petition to be distributed in Saudi Arabia, the authors sent copies through the mail and printed it in the foreign Arab press.

King Fahd's slowness to react has worried Saudis that he is unable to handle the crisis; he has

already stalled on a petition to institute a consultative assembly which was to provide a permanent voice outside the family.

His sybaritic lifestyle has been curtailed by illness, but critics say Saudi princes pursue lives of luxury and decadence by the Jordanian establishment. That, one critic knows with a vast expenditure of those weapons that is draining the kingdom's wealth, has made it wonder whether King Fahd, who controls the elite, will have to secure his throne. The Sunday Times.

Even a conservative says Clinton's done a good job so far

By Terence Hunt
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — With four days to go before inauguration here's an early report card on Bill Clinton: Republicans surprisingly agree with Democrats he's making a lot of smart moves and proving himself a real politician.

Americans traditionally are cool towards a new president in the transition between administrations and his first few days in office. Polls already show a surge of optimism. The

Washington establishment gives him high marks so far.

"I'm going to get in trouble (with fellow Republicans) but I give him an A-plus," said Burton Pines, chairman of the National Centre for Public Policy Research, a conservative think tank.

"I have been telling Republicans and conservatives that Bill Clinton is not going to make as many mistakes as we would like," Mr. Pines said. "I think his cabinet appointments have given Americans a lot of confidence — whether deserved or not — that Clinton wants a first-class team." Lyn Nofziger, a Republican

strategist who usually can't find anything nice to say about Democrats, said Mr. Clinton is doing very well.

"I think all this surface stuff he's doing is first rate," Mr. Nofziger said, pointing to Mr. Clinton's economic conference, his assurances to the business community that he's serious about reducing the deficit and his highly publicised meetings on the street with average citizens.

"This is good politics and I think it's selling well," Mr. Nofziger said. "It tells me he's a good pol. It doesn't tell me what he

what he's going to do about the economy."

Eddie Mahe, a Republican strategist, grudgingly said Mr. Clinton "did a masterful job" running last week's economic conference.

"He's good on gimmicks," Mr. Mahe said. "The question is, is he going to be as good at governing? I think he genuinely has a solid majority of the people in this country willing to take the attitude: 'well, let's give him a chance.'"

For the first time in six years, more Americans believe the economy is getting better than feel it is getting worse, according to a Washington Post-ABC News poll.

A majority believe Mr. Clinton will do a better job than President George Bush in fixing the economy.

"He's building a mandate during this transition period, a mandate for his policy change in the area of stimulating the economy

and doing something about the deficit and controlling the cost of health care," said James Thurder, director of American University's Centre for Congressional and Presidential Studies.

With diverse viewpoints in his cabinet and a White House chief of staff who is not a Washington insider, Mr. Clinton is telegraphing that he intends to be a strong president, said Bob Squier, a Democratic consultant.

"He wants to be in the middle of his own presidency," Mr. Squier said.

All the praise doesn't mean there aren't some concerns.

Women's groups are pressing for more women to be appointed to cabinet jobs. There are grumblings that Mr. Clinton hasn't started to name the hundreds of sub-cabinet officials who actually

will make his government run.

There have been few hints how Mr. Clinton will do with foreign policy problems, although he has supported Mr. Bush in sending troops to Somalia and taken a tougher line against Serbian ethnic war in Bosnia.

There have been few hints how Mr. Clinton will do with foreign policy problems, although he has supported Mr. Bush in sending troops to Somalia and taken a tougher line against Serbian ethnic war in Bosnia.

King of the gypsies refuses to give a royal pardon to worst of his subjects

By Victoria Clark

ROMANIA — Dripping gypsy in a sweeping polka dot dress, gypsy Princess Luminitsa sits six hours queueing for petrol like any other Romanian, in Transylvanian town of Sibiu.

Three years after the overthrow of Nicolae Ceausescu and communism, Romania is still trying to supply the bare essentials. Princess Luminitsa is not surprised that Germany's refugee camps and jails are packed with Romanians — about 80 per cent are gypsies who long ago mastered the art of crossing borders illegally.

Her only objection to the German government deporting 100 asylum-seekers and illegal migrants back to Romania is that now, with the onset of winter, it is the worst time to do it. There is no seasonal farm work for the gypsies to come home to.

Her father, Ion Cioba, the proclaimed king of gypsies, has warned against any crime: "If a man says to me and says he has to feed his children — what I say?" asks the mighty king, throwing up his gold-plated hands in helpless resignation.

For the gypsy royals any illegal outrage at German immigration against their gypsies does not label Romania a racist, nor do they dredge the crime committed against people by the Nazis. Like Romanians, they know that they tend to be feckless and liable to steal.

Germany cannot be a country where people who steal and work illegally, says German diplomat in Bucharest — and one gypsy once arriving home by plane to find his 43 reinforced point: "What do you think we are doing over there? We beg, we stole, we managed over we could, how we know

Princess Luminitsa reminds us there are 17 different gypsy tribes in Romania — the bearers, the violin makers, etc. who, unlike Romania's other tribes, have failed to make a name for themselves. "Some of these tribes just don't want to work they don't respect the law of State," she said.

Like Princess Luminitsa, as a rule, refuse to take advantage of the free education Romania provides. Not asset to factory, they are among the to be made unemployed.

Many lost their livelihoods in the cooperative farms were closed in 1990.

We thinkers have always got on with the Romanians because work," she says proudly, beaming her palm and flogging a complete gypsy costume.

Her tribe produces the tin vessels for the production of anise plum brandy. Her people have suffered no persecution except for the confiscation of decorative gold coins worn by women, which with the decline of communism have now returned.

Her gold-embossed visiting card, the satellite dish on her car's large suburban home and photograph of her father crowned with solid gold tell this summer, proved that gypsies are prosperous. Romanians are better qualified than to profit from the free-for-all and the unscrupulousness that the Romanian economy today. Like any Romanian, Princess Luminitsa and her father know the vast majority of those who returned may be the victims of discrimination but not of starvation.

Why should they receive political asylum? Two serious outbreaks of anti-gypsy violence in the past three years do not make pogroms," he said.

— The Observer.

The College

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Hamas

(Continued from page 1)

Hamas, which, like other Muslim fundamentalist groups, rules out any dealing with the Jewish state.

Mr. Arafat demonstrated Thursday that he was not willing to heed a pressing Hamas call for an immediate withdrawal from the peace talks when he stopped short of making such an unambiguous demand from the foreign ministers of the Arab countries which are also involved in the negotiations. Instead, the PLO chairman appeared to settle for a strong statement from the ministers, who met in Cairo Wednesday and Thursday, calling on the U.N. Security Council to set a deadline for Israel to allow the return of the 415 Palestinians (see separate story).

The PLO and Hamas are vying for the leadership of the Palestinians living in the occupied West Bank and Gaza and have clashed frequently.

The Tunis meeting, involving Mr. Arafat and Hamas political bureau chief Moussa Abu Marzouk, Hamas envoy in Iran Imad Al Alami and Amman-based Hamas representatives Ibrahim Ghoshe and Mohammad Nazzal, did not produce a quick agreement to resolve the differences between the PLO and Hamas.

But both sides agreed to meet again in Khartoum, Sudan, on Jan. 1, reports from Tunis said. Few other details have emerged from the Tunis meetings, which also brought several other hard-line factions opposed to the Middle East peace process.

The Tunis meetings, which were held in the name of Palestinian unity, were prompted by Israel's expulsion of 415 Palestinians on Dec. 17 in retaliation for the Toledado killing as well as two other attacks which killed five other Israeli soldiers in the occupied Gaza Strip this month. Sheikh Assad Bayoud Al Tamimi, head of the Islamic Jihad-Beit Al Maqdes group which mostly endorses PLO decisions but professes a hardline approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict, also attended the Tunis meeting.

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Economy

South African graduates face bleak future

JOHANNESBURG (R) — South Africa proudly reported record school graduation results this month — but only three out of 100 graduates can hope for a job. The Department of Education said prospects for graduates entering the formal labour market in the coming year were very bleak. The South African Press Association (SAPA) reported this week. Independent economists are predicting an unemployment rate of over 40 per cent in a country of 39 million people, experiencing its worst recession in 80 years. Blacks are hit hardest, but whites are also suffering their worst unemployment rates in decades.

Financial Markets

Jordan Times		
In co-operation with Cairo Amman Bank		
Dollar in International Markets		
	New York Close	Tokyo Close
	Date: 24.12.92	Date: 25.12.92
100 US Dollars	1.5255	1.5210
100 Japanese Yen	1.5995	1.5960
100 Swiss Franc	1.4495	1.4445
100 German Mark	5.4500	5.4445
100 British Pound	123.95	123.65
100 Australian Dollar	1.2278	1.2220

Summary Interest Rates				
	1 MTH	3 MTHS	6 MTHS	12 MTHS
100 US Dollars	3.75	5.56	3.65	3.87
100 Japanese Yen	7.00	7.10	6.28	6.75
100 Swiss Franc	8.70	8.56	8.10	7.55
100 German Mark	6.10	5.95	5.65	5.35
100 British Pound	10.75	10.88	10.38	9.38
100 Australian Dollar	3.87	3.75	3.68	3.65
100 Canadian Dollar	10.62	10.43	9.93	9.06

Summary Interest Rates				
	1 MTH	3 MTHS	6 MTHS	12 MTHS
100 US Dollars	3.75	5.56	3.65	3.87
100 Japanese Yen	7.00	7.10	6.28	6.75
100 Swiss Franc	8.70	8.56	8.10	7.55
100 German Mark	6.10	5.95	5.65	5.35
100 British Pound	10.75	10.88	10.38	9.38
100 Australian Dollar	3.87	3.75	3.68	3.65
100 Canadian Dollar	10.62	10.43	9.93	9.06

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	Bid	Offer
100 US Dollars	0.6880	0.6900
100 Japanese Yen	1.0457	1.0509
100 Swiss Franc	0.4300	0.4322
100 German Mark	0.4761	0.4785
100 British Pound	0.1261	0.1267
100 Australian Dollar	0.5556	0.5584
100 Canadian Dollar	0.3621	0.3640
100 New Zealand Dollar	0.9730	0.9780
100 Hong Kong Dollar	0.0482	0.0484
100 Singapore Dollar	0.02091	0.02101

	Bid	Offer
100 US Dollars	1.7970	1.8200
100 Japanese Yen	0.0358	0.0395
100 Swiss Franc	0.1800	0.1840
100 German Mark	2.2670	2.3000
100 British Pound	0.1850	0.1872
100 Australian Dollar	0.2020	0.2150
100 Canadian Dollar	1.7560	1.7820
100 New Zealand Dollar	0.1850	0.1872
100 Hong Kong Dollar	0.3650	0.3375
100 Singapore Dollar	1.4300	1.4600

	23.12.92 Close	16.12.92 Close
100 US Dollars	169.64	167.74
100 Japanese Yen	125.27	120.80
100 Swiss Franc	184.59	183.25
100 German Mark	227.60	229.51
100 British Pound	240.78	239.15

Japan cuts arms growth, boosts public works spending

TOKYO (R) — Japan's cabinet formally adopted a draft budget Saturday for the coming fiscal year featuring the lowest growth in defence spending in 33 years and a sharp rise in public works to shake the economy out of its doldrums.

The austerity budget for the year beginning next April grew by just 0.2 per cent of 72.35 trillion yen (\$588 billion) from this year's, a finance ministry official said.

It was the lowest growth in six years, the official said after a meeting of Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa's cabinet.

The budget bill will be sent to a session of parliament beginning Jan. 22 and approval is expected by the end of March. Mr. Miyazawa's ruling Liberal Democrats hold a solid majority in the policy-making lower house.

Defence spending which had steadily grown until the collapse of the Soviet Union, received a two per cent increase, the smallest rise since 1960-1961.

Military spending, which had grown by about six per cent annually until last year, was long considered untouchable because of Japan's strategic ties with Washington.

The draft budget allots 4.64 trillion yen (\$37.7 billion) to defence compared with this year's 4.52 trillion yen (\$36.7 billion).

The Japanese air force, however, won approval for its most expensive piece of equipment —

two Boeing early-warning AWACS aircraft based on the 767 jetliner.

Government funds for foreign aid topped the one trillion yen level for the first time, mainly because of diplomatic considerations ahead of next year's Group of Seven summit to be held in Tokyo.

Leaders from the United States, Germany, Japan, France, Italy, Canada and Britain are to meet in Tokyo from July 7-9.

Foreign aid will grow by 6.5 per cent to 1.01 trillion yen (\$8.2 billion), mainly to increase aid grants to the poorest developing countries. The rest will come in yen loans.

The slowing of the Japanese economy has forced the government into tight fiscal straits, including an expected shortfall in tax revenues, the officials said.

The draft sees tax revenues falling to 61 trillion yen (\$497 billion) in 1993-1994, which would be the first decline in 10 years, the officials said.

To make up for falling tax revenues, the finance ministry plans to raise 8.13 trillion yen (\$66.1 billion) through new public bond issues in 1993-1994. They will be in the form of "construction" bonds used to help finance public investment.

To stimulate domestic demand and achieve the government's forecast goal of a 3.5 per cent rise in gross national product next year, the budget boosts public

investment by 4.8 per cent to 8.57 trillion yen (\$69.6 billion) in 1993-1994, the biggest rise in five years.

"The government gave much more consideration to the economy this year by allowing higher growth in public investment," a finance ministry official said.

Among public works, the budget targets improvement of sewage facilities and parks, and promotion of housing construction under Mr. Miyazawa's pet project of bringing a bigger share of Japan's wealth to the general public, the official said.

The budget draft also includes a package to boost loan and investment projects to encourage capital spending, support small firms and improve infrastructure.

Dassault Aerospace tighten links

PARIS (R) — Dassault Aviation, France's two leading aircraft makers, have announced plans for closer links to meet stiffer global competition.

The deal, while far short of a merger, is the latest in a series of combinations as the world arms industry restructures to reflect the falling defence budgets of the post-cold war era.

Founded by French aviation pioneer Marcel Dassault and now managed by his son Serge, Dassault builds fighter aircraft as well as business jets.

State-owned Aerospatiale makes a wide variety of civil and military products, including missiles, helicopters and aircraft, and is a leading member of the Airbus Industrie civil aircraft consortium.

In a move actively promoted by the French government, the two firms will draw up a joint research and development programme and form a strategic committee to seek common ground on sub-contractors and suppliers, marketing and strategy.

By strengthening their ties, they said they wanted to tackle global competition in the best possible conditions while preserving their own identity.

"In an international environment marked by increasing competition and major industrial restructurings, a new basis is thus being established for two of France's main contractors to strengthen their cooperation on an equal footing," they said.

Aerospace analysts said such moves were inevitable as the industry, stung by shrinking arms spending and a recession in the civil aircraft market, reorganised. The resources are not politically available to continue to maintain a competitive presence on a broad front of aerospace operations," said UBS Securities Inc.'s Wolfgang Demisch. "You have to cut the overall effort to fit the declining budgets."

The world's defence industry is going through convulsions as it adapts to the Soviet Union's demise and military budget cuts. This has brought a host of deals, notably in the United States.

Two weeks ago Lockheed Corp. said it decided to buy General Dynamics Corp's fighter aircraft division for \$1.53 billion, while last month Martin Marietta Corp. agreed to buy U.S. General Electric Co.'s aerospace division in a \$3.05 billion deal.

Aerospatiale and Dassault said they were open to international partnerships, notably with European firms.

Egypt cotton exports seen down this year

CAIRO (R) — Egypt's cotton exports will fall this year because of a world slump in prices and closure of traditional markets in eastern Europe, the chairman of the State Holding Company has said.

Ahmad Shouman told Reuters he expected exports for the 1992/93 season to total slightly less than the 51,000 bales for 1991/92. Egypt has exported about 40,000 bales so far this season, earning about \$32 million.

Mr. Shouman said an effort to revive the flagging industry by boosting exports had run into a world slump in prices and the collapse of textiles industries in the traditional markets of eastern Europe.

Most of a quota of 155,000 bales which was set aside for export last year eventually had to be sold to local textile plants at reduced prices, he said.

"The whole world is jammed,

these are very difficult circumstances to boost exports...I expect to be down slightly from last year," said Mr. Shouman.

Japan, Egypt's biggest market, has taken about 8,000 bales so far this year compared with nearly 20,000 bales in 1991/92. South Korea and Switzerland are the next biggest markets.

The main selling season for Egyptian cotton runs from October to December, with a smaller season in January and February. Cotton exports have tailed off dramatically in recent years, from 685,000 bales in 1981/82 to a low of 45,000 in 1990/91.

High-quality long-staple brands of cotton have lost some of their premium on world markets because of advances in textile technology while Egypt's socialist-style economic policies discouraged farmers from growing cotton by forcing them to sell

their produce to the state at below market prices.

Cotton officials expected this year's crop to rise nearly 20 per cent to 1,090,000 bales. Prices paid to farmers by state marketing companies went up between 10 and 30 per cent, depending on the grade of cotton, as part of a policy of gradual liberalisation.

The chairman of Egypt's Holding Company for Spinning and Weaving, Mahmoud Ibrahim, said last week state sector exports of textiles would rise by 17 per cent to \$398 million in 1992/93 from \$338 million in 1991/92.

Mr. Ibrahim said shares of up to 10 per cent in nine state-owned textiles companies would be offered for public subscription shortly, as part of Egypt's overhaul of its public sector with the International Monetary Fund and World Bank.

Russia to issue 10,000 rouble note soon to counter inflation

MOSCOW (R) — Russia's central bank will soon introduce a 10,000-rouble note to help keep pace with the country's fierce inflation, ITAR-TASS said Saturday.

The news agency said the leadership of the Russian Parliament decided Monday to order printing of the notes, each worth about \$24.

The highest denomination note at present is the 5,000 rouble bill, introduced earlier this year to help ease an acute shortage in paper money that had caused a backlog in wage payments. Inflation has reached some 2,000 per cent over the last year.

Alexei Ulyukav, economic adviser to Russia's new prime minister, this week dismissed reports from Moscow that the government would jettison its tight money policy.

But he said demands from ascendant conservatives in parliament for greater state spending would pump up the big budget deficit, already a sea of red ink.

Mr. Ulyukav said reports the central bank was preparing to flood the stricken economy with one trillion roubles (\$2.4 billion) were largely empty talk.

"I don't think the chiefs of the central bank will really overturn the monetary policy," Mr. Ulyukav told a news briefing.

Calling central bank chief Viktor Geraschenko a good banker, Mr. Ulyukav said: "His

words, his statements are more dangerous than his actions."

International financial institutions and Russia's many creditors have demanded the tight-money policy as part of a resuscitation package for the former superpower. Any overhaul of that policy would set off alarm bells around the world.

However, Mr. Ulyukav acknowledged the recent replacement of reformist acting Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar by a Soviet-era technocrat had opened the door to conservatives' demands for greater state spending and more credits for state industry.

And he said new Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin had no real economic vision of his own and could prove reliant on the easy-money faction that controls the central bank.

"The situation is now more dangerous than before, because

we can foresee the increase in government spending, particularly social spending," Mr. Ulyukav said.

He said the deficit was likely to hit 10 or 11 per cent of Russian gross national product. That is well ahead of its current target of six per cent, he said.

On Monday the influential Russian newspaper Izvestia reported the central bank would pump one trillion roubles into the economy to shore up ailing industry.

This would deal a fresh blow to Mr. Gaidar's reformist legacy by undermining the economic discipline that tight money was intended to instill in Russia's managers.

Mr. Ulyukav, formerly a closer adviser to Mr. Gaidar, said Western fears of a major change in Russian reforms were unwarranted.

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Bosnia's Muslims accuse Serbs of defying 'no fly' zone

SARAJEVO (R) — Muslim forces accused their Bosnian Serb foes of defying a United Nations "no fly" zone Saturday by using helicopters to reinforce an attack on the north Bosnian town of Gradacac.

Sarajevo Radio said the Muslim-held town was shelled throughout the night and that helicopters brought extra men to join infantry attacks launched on Muslim positions after dawn.

The charge was denied by a senior military source in Banja Luka, the main Serb army and air force centre in the region.

"All flights are controlled by the United Nations at the air base so they know what is happening," he said. "We are not flying combat missions."

"In any case, we can supply and reinforce each of our positions around Gradacac by road."

The United States and other Western countries are threatening to use force to make the "no fly" order stick, although U.N. peacekeepers in Bosnia fear such action would expose them to retaliation by Serb fighters.

A British army officer and two civilians were wounded by splinters near Tuzla in central Bosnia when three mortar bombs fired from Serb positions exploded near a British armoured convoy.

A military spokesman said a junior officer, Lieutenant Justin Freedland, 25, of the 9th/12th Lancers, was hit in the arm as the

convoy crossed Serb lines to meet relief aid trucks.

The British, who under local U.N. rules of engagement are not allowed to shoot back when attacked with mortars, did not return the fire.

The Bosnian capital Sarajevo, enjoying a Christmas lull in fighting, was quiet during the night apart from sporadic shelling and anti-aircraft fire.

Slobodan Milosevic, re-elected as Serbia's president, told the U.S. Cable News Network (CNN) that the fighting in Bosnia was a mistake and that an agreement in which all Muslims, Croats and Serbs felt equal was the only solution.

"There is only one way out, in two parts," he said, speaking in English. "One is immediate ceasefire and the other is continuation of their negotiations, all three sides, to make a solution on their own. There is no other way than that."

Serbia's Election Commission released provisional final results, confirming the victory of Mr. Milosevic and his ruling Socialist Party of Serbia in Serbia's presidential and parliamentary elections. It said it would not make an official announcement until it had decided on all complaints.

Opposition candidates say the vote was rigged.

The Election Commission said Mr. Milosevic had won 56.3 per cent of the vote and challenger Milan Panic 33.8 per cent. Other candidates won only a few votes.

In the race for the Serbian parliament, the Socialists took 101 seats, their allied Serbian Radical Party 73, the opposition Democratic Movement of Serbia 49 and other parties a few seats each.

A U.N. source said 900 Canadian U.N. troops, prevented from entering Serb-controlled areas of Bosnia, may head for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia instead.

UNPROFOR troops are being sent to Macedonia to prevent violence from spilling over from neighboring Kosovo, where ethnic tensions between the majority Albanian population and the governing Serbs are reported to be worsening.

Macedonia will close its border with Kosovo if trouble breaks out among the ethnic Albanian population there, the republic's interior minister was quoted as saying Thursday.

"If conflicts erupt in Kosovo, we will close our border, because we cannot support anyone and we cannot allow ourselves to interfere in somebody else's conflict," foreign Minister Ljubomir Frckovski told the Skopje daily Nova Makedonia.

Mr. Frckovski said there was a risk of clashes with Albanians in Macedonia along the border with Kosovo. "That is why UNPRO-



A nurse rocks a girl in the Kosovo Hospital while a boy, injured during the fighting in Sarajevo, sits nearby (AFP photo).

Niger votes on new constitution

NIAMEY (R) — Niger's citizens began voting Saturday in a referendum for a new constitution which will pave the way for the West African country's first free elections since independence from France in 1960.

Interior Minister Daouda Rabiou said Friday that a decisive vote in favour of constitutional change was crucial if parliamentary and presidential elections were to go ahead as planned in January and February.

"A massive 'yes' vote is necessary to avoid a catastrophe because it will not be possible to conduct the other elections and the country will be in a legal vacuum," he said.

The proposed constitution

must win the approval of at least 50 per cent of those who vote. No word on turnout of the estimated four million voters was available by midday.

Voting was due to end at 1700 GMT in the centre of the country and at 1800 GMT in the north. First results from central regions were expected overnight.

A national conference stripped military President Ali Sabou of his powers last year and set a timetable for multiparty elections but they have already been postponed four times.

Prime Minister Amadou Cheifou and his transitional administration blame the delays on the state's near bankruptcy, strikes by civil servants and armed rebel-

lion by Tuareg comrades in the north.

The National Election Committee has acknowledged that electoral lists are in many cases incorrect or incomplete, that there are shortages of ballot boxes and voting slips and there is a lack of vehicles to transport electoral officials and collect results in the vast, landlocked Sahelian country.

Mr. Daouda said voters with no ballot card or official document could take part if vouched for by a village or family head.

To boost security during the poll the country's land borders were closed for 24 hours from midnight Friday.

Yeltsin sets up media supervisory body

MOSCOW (Agencies) — President Boris Yeltsin Saturday ordered the creation of a new body to supervise state radio and television coverage of political developments in Russia.

A decree by Mr. Yeltsin appointed Mikhail Poltoranin, a close ally who resigned last month as information minister, to head the new organisation. It gave him a rank equivalent to first deputy prime minister — a move likely to gail conservatives who had pressed for his removal from the government.

Presidential Press Bureau Chief Anatoly Krasikov said there was no question of the new body, "the Federal Information Centre of Russia," exercising any censorship role.

"It will only coordinate policy between chief (state) media," he added.

Television and radio stations

would be directly subordinated to the information centre. It would also coordinate the activity of ITAR-TASS News Agency and Commonwealth Television.

The decree listed among its chief tasks ensuring "the broad dissemination of accurate and truthful information about the course of reform in Russia and the explanation of the state policies of the Russian Federation."

It was not immediately clear exactly how the centre would operate.

Mr. Yeltsin clashed with media bosses last month when he summarily sacked the head of Commonwealth Television, Yegor Yakovlev, under pressure from conservatives.

Editors feared the president could be taking a tougher line on the media, but said after a Kremlin meeting he had reassured them there would be no crack-

down on press freedoms.

Mr. Poltoranin is generally regarded among media chiefs as an advocate of press freedom.

Mr. Yeltsin preserved most of his economic reforms and rejected a major overhaul of his cabinet Wednesday.

The reformers will report to the Soviet-era bureaucracy who became prime minister last week.

Mr. Yeltsin also kept Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, whom hardliners accuse of being too pro-Western and want to oust. The defence, security, and interior ministers also remain unchanged.

Still, it remains unclear whether the new cabinet will pursue the reform course set by Yegor Gaidar, who was replaced as prime minister last week by Viktor Chernomyrdin, a Soviet-era manager who ran the natural gas industry.

Nigeria's president warns against chaos

LAGOS (R) — Nigeria's military president, criticised by civil rights groups and others for extending army rule to next August, has warned Nigerians against chaos and urged them not to stage protests.

General Ibrahim Babangida, in power since 1985, said in a Christmas message that the government knew of plans by some people to organise street protests in Africa's most populous country.

"This is the only country that God has given us as our own. Its health is our health. Its destabilisation will be to our own detriment," Gen. Babangida said after a year of some of Nigeria's worst ethnic and religious violence since independence in 1960.

"We must remember it is in the nature of chaos itself that those who plan and execute it often find themselves and their families enveloped in it, together with millions of citizens."

Nigeria was hit by political uncertainty last month when Mr. Babangida's Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC) extended military rule by eight months from Jan. 2 following fraudulent civilian presidency primaries run by two army-created parties.

Civil rights groups and others, including ex-politicians, have urged the military not to cling to power and criticised as divisive a new, convoluted method to pick presidency candidates.

Bush pardons 6 Iran-contra figures

WASHINGTON (R) — President George Bush, ending the criminal prosecutions arising from the Iran-contra scandal, Thursday pardoned former Defence Secretary Caspar Weinberger and five other top Reagan administration aides implicated in the affair.

President-elect Bill Clinton expressed concern over the pardons and the Iran-contra prosecutor blasted Mr. Bush's action, saying the Iran-contra cover-up, which has continued for more than six years, has now been completed.

Special Prosecutor Lawrence Walsh accused Mr. Bush of misconduct of his own but refused to speculate on whether his six-year, \$35 million probe will now focus on the outgoing president.

Mr. Walsh said his office just learned on Dec. 11, that Mr. Bush had failed to produce for investigators his own highly relevant, contemporaneous notes despite repeated requests for such documents.

He said there would be "appropriate action" over the notes and said Mr. Bush's refusal amounted to "misconduct."

Mr. Clinton told a news conference he was concerned about the pardons, saying "I am concerned about any action that sends a signal that if you work for the government you are above the law."

Mr. Bush, issuing his pardons a day before Christmas and less than a month before he leaves

office, called Mr. Weinberger "a true American patriot" and brushed aside concerns that his action would prevent full disclosure of facts about the affair.

"This matter has been investigated exhaustively," Mr. Bush said of the Iran-contra affair which involved a covert White House-run scheme to sell arms to Iran and use the proceeds to support the Nicaraguan contra rebels in 1985-86.

Apart from Mr. Weinberger, the only member of then-President Ronald Reagan's cabinet charged in the affair, Mr. Bush also issued pardons for former White House National Security Adviser Robert McFarlane, former Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams and three former senior CIA officials.

Mr. Walsh said Mr. Bush's pardons "undermines the principles that no man is above the law. It demonstrates that powerful people with powerful allies can commit serious crimes in high office — deliberately abusing the public trust — without consequence."

Just before the presidential election on Nov. 3, evidence came out in the Weinberger case showing that Mr. Bush, who was vice president at the time of Iran-contra, knew more about the arms sales than he had admitted. Some Republicans blamed the disclosure for Mr. Bush's defeat by Mr. Clinton.

But White House spokesman

Marlin Fitzwater said that evidence was the only mention of Mr. Bush in Mr. Weinberger's extensive personal notes on the affair. "There is indeed nothing in those notes," he told reporters.

Mr. Bush, seeking to put behind him questions about his involvement in the affair, said he had asked the prosecutor to release a copy of his sworn testimony given in 1988.

Mr. Weinberger, 75, a longtime Reagan aide, had been set to go on trial Jan. 5 on four criminal charges of lying to Congress and criminal investigators about the affair and his notes. If convicted, he could have faced up to 20 years in prison.

"In granting these pardons today, I am doing what I believe honour, decency and fairness require," Mr. Bush said in his statement.

In Los Angeles, Mr. Reagan issued a statement saying he was pleased by Mr. Bush's action.

"These men have served their country for many years with honour and distinction," he said, adding that he was "glad that this long ordeal has ended for them and their families."

Both Mr. Reagan and Mr. Bush could have been called to testify as defence witnesses if Mr. Weinberger had gone to trial.

Mr. Walsh vowed to make a "full report to Congress and the public" describing the details and extent of the cover-up that he said involved "the highest-ranking" Reagan era officials.

WORLD NEWS IN BRIEF

Italian police recover Degas paintings

ROME (R) — Two paintings by the 19th century French artist Edgar Degas, stolen from a museum in northern Italy earlier this month, have been recovered, police said Saturday. The two Degas works were among 200 paintings, with an estimated total value of some \$10 million, which went missing from a modern art museum in the town of Ferrara three weeks ago. Police recovered all 20 paintings during a raid near the northern city of Bolzano in which seven people were arrested. Investigators believe the thieves planned either to smuggle the haul across the border into Switzerland or Austria or sell the group off piece by piece to wealthy collectors currently holidaying in the Dolomites. Edgar Degas is known as one of the greatest 19th century French artists and a master of the human figure in movement who used a bold colours like the impressionists. The two Degas paintings recovered were Portrait Of Boldini and Portrait Of Boldini Standing With A Hat.

6 killed in Sri Lanka mine blast

COLOMBO (R) — A mine blast in eastern Sri Lanka killed six people including a senior government official Saturday, a military spokesman said. The spokesman blamed Tamil separatist rebels for the blast which ripped apart a jeep carrying the official and five others in the Batticaloa district. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam are fighting for their own homeland in the north and east. "We don't know who the other people are as yet but we assume they must have been government officials because they were travelling on official business," the spokesman said. On Thursday, 42 soldiers and 30 rebels died in an ambush in the northeastern Welio Oya area.

Author Monica Dickens dead

LONDON (R) — British author Monica Dickens, great granddaughter of Charles Dickens, died in hospital on Christmas Day aged 77, her publisher Viking said Saturday. She was a prolific author, writing almost a book a year since her 1939 bestseller One Pair Of Hands. Her last book One Of The Family, is to be published in May. Her first books were based on her early life, working as a cook, nurse and local newspaper reporter. She lived much of her life in Cape Cod, Massachusetts, after marrying navy Commander Roy Stratton in 1951. In 1974 she founded a U.S. arm of the Samaritans welfare group in Boston. Dickens had cancer and was in hospital in Reading, near London. She is survived by two children, Viking said.

Group: 56 journalists killed in 1992

PARIS (R) — At least 57 journalists were killed around the world this year either on duty or because of their opinions, an international press rights group said. The Organisation Reporters-Sans-Frontieres (Reporters Without Borders) — (RSF) said the single highest death toll was in Turkey where 12 journalists were killed, followed by Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina where 11 reporters died. "The figures are unfortunately lower than last year when 64 journalists were killed but they are higher than in 1990 when there were 42 dead," the Paris-based group said. Other countries where journalists were killed in 1992 were Colombia (five), Peru (five), Tajikistan (three), Chad (three), Angola (three), the United States (two), Philippines (two) and Venezuela (two). Azerbaijan, Egypt, Georgia, Hong Kong, Lebanon, Moldova, Papua-New Guinea, Rwanda and Sudan each saw one journalist killed. RSF said it was unable to establish whether the deaths of approximately 30 more journalists were linked to their jobs or to opinions they might have expressed. The organisation said the situation was especially serious in parts of Turkey where Kurdish guerrillas were fighting the government. Four staff journalists of the Kurdish newspaper Ozgur Gundem were killed there within three months. It said at least 30 reporters had been killed in the Balkans over the past two years.

'Charles bans Diana from seeing sons over Christmas'

LONDON (R) — Britain's Prince Charles has banned his estranged wife Princess Diana from seeing their two sons for six days over the Christmas period, British tabloid newspapers reported Saturday.

The mass-circulation Sun newspaper and Today carried front-page stories headlined respectively "Di banned from boys for a week" and "Charles bans Diana from seeing princes."

The reports, which were uncorroborated, said royal heir Charles, 44, imposed the six-day ban starting on Christmas eve in revenge for Princess Diana's refusal to spend Christmas with Queen Elizabeth and the rest of the royal family at Sandringham.

"You do what you want. The boys will stay with me," Today's report quoted the prince as saying.

The Sun said Princess Diana had wanted the boys, who are second and third in line to the throne, to spend the holiday season with her but Prince Charles insisted they keep up the royal tradition of Christmas with the Queen at Sandringham, her country estate about 160 kilometres northeast of London.

"It effectively shows he has emerged victorious in the bitter 'war of the Waleses' and is now intent on playing the devoted father," the Sun report said.

Earlier reports said the two princes, William, 10, and Harry, eight, would spend Christmas Day with their father at Sandringham but be reunited with their mother at her family's stately home, Althorp, in southern England, Saturday.

Princess Diana, 31, was at Althorp Friday — her first Christmas Day away from her sons.

The formal separation of the prince and princess of Wales, who married in 1981, was announced to a stunned nation two weeks ago. Princess Diana continues to carry out official duties and it was made clear in the separation announcement that she would also continue to be welcome at formal family occasions.

China reportedly jails Tibetan nuns and monks

PEKING (R) — China has sentenced 10 Tibetans, mostly monks and nuns, to prison terms of up to nine years for participating in pro-independence protests earlier this year, the Tibet Information Network said Saturday.

The longest sentence went to Lobzang Dorje, a 20-year-old monk, who was sentenced to nine years imprisonment on Sep. 16 for allegedly encouraging 20 colleagues to demonstrate outside Lhasa's Jokhang Temple in May, the London-based monitoring group said.

The group based its information on Chinese court documents it had obtained, it said. Officials in Lhasa could not be reached for comment.

The Tibet Information Network said those sentenced were not represented by lawyers during the trials. It said it had information that several had been beaten or tortured.

China, which dates its disputed claim to the Himalayan region to the 13th century, has imposed heavy security on Lhasa, Tibet's capital, since March 1989 when it crushed pro-independence demonstrations.

Separatist demonstrations still periodically take place, travellers say.

The Tibet Information Network said the May 16 protest was the fourth to take place that week. At least 30 people were arrested during that week, it said, but the whereabouts of most are unknown.

In addition to the monk sentenced to nine years in jail, one was sentenced to eight years, one to seven years and one 18-year-old monk to six years.

One nun and one layman were sentenced to five years each, the group said.

The group quoted the court document as saying the stiff sentences were imposed "in order to protect" the dictatorship of the proletariat, to preserve the unification of the motherland, and to crack down severely on the criminal activities of the counter-revolutionaries in their attempts to separate the motherland."

The group said three nuns and one monk were sentenced to long terms for another protest in February.

One 22-year-old nun was given a term of seven years while two others, aged 18 and 19, were sentenced to five years each.

An 18-year-old monk was sentenced to five years for his part in the protest, the group said.

Meanwhile, an official magazine said China has smashed a gang led by a peasant who wanted to overthrow the Communist Party and establish a new imperial dynasty with himself as emperor.

Police arrested 16 members of the "counter-revolutionary clique" headed by Li Chungfu, 58, in the central province of Heilan in April, two years after Mr. Li began plotting the monthly Democracy And Law said in its December edition.

The gang included four members of the Communist Party, one

of whom was a battalion commander in the militia.

Police involved in smashing the gang confirmed by telephone that the case had occurred, but they declined to answer questions.

The magazine quoted officials as saying that the plot showed that peasants in poor and backward areas of China were ripe targets for tricksters and plotters and even conspiracies against the Communist Party.

"This kind of foolhardy clamour for a feudalistic restoration is so ridiculous that it makes you laugh your head off," it quoted one police official as saying.

"However, viewed from another angle, this counter-revolutionary clique cannot but cause us to ponder and be vigilant as it extended across two counties and six villages and there were four Communist Party members among the 16 participants," he said.

"In these past few years feudalistic superstitions have raised their head in mountain villages, religious forces have become pervasive and some evil people with ulterior motives have taken the opportunity to sow discord between the Communist Party and the masses and engage in illegal activities."

"Peasants in isolated, backward mountain areas can easily be tricked and used, and some even become counter-revolutionaries," he said.

Throughout Chinese history, peasant rebellions with religious or historical overtones have

harassed and sometimes toppled governments.

China's Communist Party itself drew its power from the countryside during its successful fight in the civil war that ended with the late Mao Tse-tung founding a "new China" in 1949.

The Communist Party banned "feudalistic superstitions" as one of the six evils that must be eliminated from society in order to ensure it will cover have a competitor for peasants' loyalties.

While Mr. Li's romantic quest to bring back the system of the Tang Dynasty that flourished more than 1,000 years ago and found his own "heavenly kingdom" was clearly futile, his plan to use the countryside to surround the cities in order to topple the ruling party echoed the Communist Party's own route to eventual success.

Mr. Li even ordered the militia leader in his group to join the army and try to use his influence to gather troops who could be used in the planned uprising against the Communist Party, the official magazine said.

Police managed to crack the case after months of undercover work by an agent who got Mr. Li's trust by pretending to be an expert in the ancient Chinese superstitious art of geomancy.

Once the group's password was discovered, several dozen police and paramilitary troops were able to swoop on their hideout and arrest the members.

China sets new definition for being 'well-off'

PEKING (R) — China's mic boom this year has officials to come up with a definition for "well-off" living climbing living standards across the country. The Xinhua News Agency the new state standard off urban residents set at capita income at 2,5 (\$410) and the average at 70 years. The average urban resident would least nine years of school paid two-week vacation year. It takes a bit less well-off in China's countryside where the bulk of the 1.2 billion people live in areas, the average well-off would make a per capita of 1,100 yuan (\$189), yuan (\$12) a year on a television and live in with at least one tele-

Japanese to live even longer, ministry says

TOKYO (R) — already the world's for people, have stretched age life expectancy to more than 82 years and 76 for men, 80 for women, the latest Health Ministry survey, the latest showed Japanese women an average of 82.07 years from 1985 and 1 years, up 1.09 years, gures show the next lon are Swiss women with a life expectancy of 80 and Swedish men, 79 years, a ministry official, ageing Japanese, popular government official, many government officials and health costs for the number of older people this year, a government showed that the Japanese people aged 6 was 16.22 million, or 1 of the total population, now over 4,000 people or over in the country.

First sterilised hippo reunited with mate

AMSTERDAM (R) — popatamuses were re Amsterdam Zoo after 30-year old female, may by becoming the first hi to be sterilised. Tanja, the pill in February months later surprised by giving birth to her 1. The young hippo later d its mother rolled on top spokesman for the zoo sterilisation was risky, b dangerous to put hipp general anaesthetic, surgery was successful a has now been reunited mate Joop.

13-year-old deli her own baby

CAPE TOWN (R) — A old girl delivered her alone in a hotel bathi, biding her pregnancy family, South African p hotel staff said. Official child, who may not be na the baby were doing wel rate Cape Town hospital a Cape Town hotel said locked herself in a staff for the delivery Monday wrapped the baby in a t, the umbilical cord still, and hid it under a bush i garden. The crying in while the child was vi mother who works at i was found by a staff n.

Delinquent mor nicks knickers

TOKYO (R) — A pac monkeys apparently dec food raided a Japanese village and got away v dried persimmons... a drying panties. A polic man in Takayama, in th Mountains northwest c said Tuesday that the grabbed some persim and also ripped down a clo They made off with n women's underwear w been hung up to dry. Police heard of the the 56-year-old apple fan them to say he thought had stolen the family. Witnesses told police more than 40 wild mo sneaked into the vill winter snows blanketed food supplies higher up they are hungry, they t down the mountains lo something to eat," the policeman said. The could distinguish betw and non-edible objects, and were apparently ju tricks, he added.

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